The Christianity of Christ

REV. ROBERT F. COYLE, D. D.

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THE CHRISTIANITY OF CHRIST

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PUBLISHED BY THE
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OAKLAND, 1892

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The sermons in this little volume are issued only at the urgent request of those who heard them. They were written amid the pressure of duty that belongs to a busy pastorate, and make no pretension to either homiletic or literary excellence. Their only value is in the precious truth they embody. The "Christianity of Christ" is a great field from which but a few small sheaves are here gathered. For whatever help the author has received, directly or indirectly, by suggestion or otherwise, in the preparation of these discourses, he makes grateful acknowledgment. In sending them forth he humbly prays that their reading may establish some in the "faith once delivered to the saints," and lead others to embrace it.

R. F. COYLE.

OAKLAND, CAL.,
December, 1891.

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THE CHRISTIANITY OF CHRIST.

[Introductory Sermon.]

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to *do* and *teach*."—*Acts 1:1.*

TO learn what the religion of Christ is and what it requires, we must turn from the traditions of men to what Jesus himself did and taught. This we have very simply and beautifully recorded in the Gospels, the first three of which are accepted as genuine by skeptics and Christians alike. There is no respectable scholarship anywhere that presumes to discredit the historical testimony of Matthew, Mark and Luke; and it is to the last of these that our text refers when it speaks of the "former treatise."

We have the Christianity of Calvin, and the Christianity of Arminius; the Christianity of Luther, and the Christianity of the Papacy; we have Christianity ritualized as among the High Church people of England, and Christianity rationalized as among the skeptics of Germany; we have it in a great variety of forms, bearing in every case the impress of the human

molds in which its raw material has been cast. I do not undertake to criticise any of these forms. That is something for which I am utterly incompetent, even if I had the self-assurance to attempt it. This, however, may be safely said that in so far as these different varieties of Christianity abide by that which has been revealed, they are true; and, in so far as they have been infiltrated with human speculation and tincttured with human prejudice, they contain more or less of error.

What I desire, let me say specifically, is to bring to your attention and write anew upon your hearts and mind the City of Christ as he himself has set it forth in precept and parable, in word and deed. Instead of drinking of the waters far down from their source, where they have been somewhat mixed and contaminated with alien streams, we are to go directly to the Fountain Head, flowing clear as crystal from the everlasting Rock, and quench our thirst there. Of course, in entering upon this study I cannot go into all the details of our Lord's life and sayings, but shall select for consideration that which He has made most salient and upon which He has laid most emphasis. In favor of this method it may be said, in the first place, that—

It will serve to direct our thought to Christianity in its *purity and simplicity.* In a recent number of one of the reviews that come to my study-table a story is told of a certain spring which for generations supplied an unfailing abundance of clear, sweet water to the

people of its neighborhood. The owner was justly proud of it; but many years ago he thought to make a shade near the spot, and so planted a tree close to the spring. The tree grew, and its shadow fell far and wide, and those who came on a summer noon to take a draught from the refreshing waters were sheltered from the fierce heat.

But, alas, the roots of the tree penetrated to the fountain, and the whole was tainted, and now the spring is neglected and its waters forsaken.

So men have often spoiled the truth as it is in Jesus by attempting to improve it. Instead of accepting it as it is in all its native plainness, undoctored and unalloyed, they have sought to subtract from it here and add to it there, and thus have either robbed it of its strength and glory, or turned thirsty souls from it altogether.

Some have endeavored to convince themselves and their fellow-men that there is really nothing to fear, that things are going to come out all right by-and-by, that the infinite goodness of the Almighty will somehow or other throw itself about every wanderer, and woo him safely home at last. They have planted the tree of a broad and easy salvation hard by the Fountain of Life, and the result has been that the roots of that tree have reached the spring, and have tainted its healing waters for multitudes of people. They can no longer endure a pure gospel, but must have it diluted and weakened and softened by human infiltrations.

God is love, and God's love is the arch that under-

lies the whole superstructure of Christianity, but that arch itself rests upon the two pillars of justice and mercy. The God who will allow men to plunge into all sorts of iniquity, and then weep over them and sweep them into heaven on the full and resistless tide of His compassion, regardless of any change of heart or character, is not the God of the Bible. A God too weak, too yielding, too sentimental to maintain the integrity of His own moral government, must surely sit upon a tottering throne. Let not man think that God's word can be made sweeter, more comforting and more attractive by planting trees of human speculation and philosophy on its margin. It is best just as it is,—best for comfort, best for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,—to make the man of God perfect, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" and to attempt to modify it, to add to it, or take from it, is to invite the plagues that are written therein. As no work of art can improve on the simplicity of nature, as no astronomy can add one beam to the sun, so no cleverness of human scholarship, no acuteness of human genius, can improve on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We turn, therefore, from human cisterns to drink out of the wells of God.

Passing from the vestibule with its jangling voices and clashing creeds, we shall enter the temple and walk and talk with Jesus. We go, not to the scribes, not to those who sit in Moses' seat, not to those who have been trained to look through glasses of a certain shade, and who are prone to see everything from a

certain ecclesiastical angle, but to the Great Teacher, to the ultimate Authority, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." This will take us out of the haze and confusion, out of the blinding dust stirred up by opposing schools, into the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness. It will lead us to the original sources, and give us our knowledge of "the old, old story" at first hand, and knowledge so obtained is always fresh and stimulating. Too much of our knowledge of the Gospel is like fruit long since plucked and labeled and put away upon the shelf. The rich flavor, the delicious taste, the juiciness it once had, are gone; but in this study I ask you to come with me and help me to shake the sweet and luscious grapes from the vine. Too long we have been content to take from this and that basket; but now we are to gather them in the very garden of the Lord. Here in the city we must get our apples and peaches and pears from the fruit-dealers as best we can, after they have come through half a dozen hands, perhaps, and we often have to pay high prices for a very poor article. But those of us who have lived in the country know how delightful it is to go back to the old farm, and, wandering out to the orchard, reach up and help ourselves, without money and without price. Well, something like that is what we propose to do in turning our attention to the Christianity of Christ.

A second thing that may be said in favor of this study is that it will give us *something connected and*

consecutive to think about. Instead of roaming about through the word of God, and taking for consideration a fragment here and a fragment there, as fancy or inclination may direct, it will chain us down to something solid, and make us familiar not with an occasional flower culled from the green pastures, but with large sections of a glorious landscape; not with texts, but with gospels. We need instruction, for without knowledge there can be no conviction, and without conviction there can be no sustained enthusiasm, and the best and most effective instruction is that which is bound together link on link. It edifies, it builds up, it strengthens, it gives symmetry to thought and character. As a preparation for this study, therefore, let me urge you to a careful and systematic reading of the gospels. Read them not by fits and starts, but go through them consecutively, and if you can find time to read one of them at a single sitting, so much the better; it will set the whole story before you in its completeness, you will see the wondrous Man on the hills and on the sea, in the temple, in the home, in the place of sorrow, moving in and out until he expires on the cross, then appears in resurrection glory, soon to ascend to the right hand of the Father Almighty, and as you read your heart will burn, worship will kindle its fires in your soul, and you will consecrate yourself anew to the Lord's service.

In favor of this undertaking it may be said, moreover, that it will serve to *clear up our ideas as to just what Christianity is.* We certainly need to be clear on

this point. There are some who seem to think that Christianity is a sort of reforming agency; that it is only one of many forces at work in the world to make men better; that it co-operates with other schemes to elevate mankind. You have seen men put jackscrews under an old dilapidated house, whose sills were rotting away, because it was built on low and miry ground, and lift it up and lay a new foundation under it, and touch it up here and there until externally it was quite attractive, but it was the old house still. There were the old beams, and the old rafters, and the old frame-work, just as they were from the beginning. But utterly different from that is the work of Christianity. We shall find as we look into the gospels that Christianity never came into the world to repair people, to mend them and patch them up and make them look a trifle better; we shall find that it never came to tinker and cobble and fix over the old house and spend its efforts in a little outside daubing.

"Behold, I make all things new," saith the Lord. A new heart, a new life, a new purpose, a new center, a new man in Christ Jesus. That is Christianity. It is not here to sew the new cloth, woven out of the agonies of the cross, to the old garments of the fleshy nature. It is not here to put the new wine of the kingdom into the old bottles. It is not here to graft the new and vigorous shoot of the spiritual life into the old sin-smitten, worm-eaten stock. It is not here to stop a leak or two in the old ship in order to keep

it afloat till it reaches shore. Christianity is not a scheme to cover up old and unsightly things under a new paint. It is not whitewash on a sepulchre. It is not perfume sprinkled on a dead carcass. It is not a mixture of light and darkness, of health and disease, of purity and impurity, but a new heart, and a new spirit, and a new name, and a new song—everything new.

I know there are some who think of Christianity as a sort of supplement or appendix to what man has done in order to make his work acceptable. But nothing could be farther from the truth. When a house has been infected with the leprosy or some deadly plague men are not content to simply fumigate its rooms, and scrape its walls, and wash its floors, but they raze it to the ground, and burn it to ashes, and build anew from the bottom up. So Christianity comes to "crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts." It comes as a new creation, fresh from the hand of God. In one word, it comes not to reform or repair, but to regenerate. This is what we shall learn as we go on with our study.

As we turn to what Jesus did and taught, we shall find, furthermore, that the Christianity of Christ is not a well-wrought system of theories and speculations and inferences and dogmas, all skillfully woven together, but that it is a series of *great historical facts*. It comes to us with the astounding information that at a given time and in a given way the unseen, eternal God, actuated by his yearning love, interposed to

save the world by the sacrifice of His Son; and the gospel story contains the history of how that Son came and suffered and died and rose again. Take these facts away and there is nothing left. Every distinctive doctrine of our faith comes out of the recorded facts of the gospel as the flower comes out of the seed. Christianity does not rest upon any theory of inspiration, verbal or otherwise; it does not rest upon a book, or any number of books, or upon the absolute harmony of every statement in the gospel with every other statement, but upon the great facts connected with the life of the Christ. Eliminate these, strike them out, and Christianity evaporates into a thin mist, too light and airy to bear up our feet as we pass out into eternity. The incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the "superhuman intervention of Almighty God to redeem fallen man and restore peace betwixt earth and heaven and give back celestial life to sinners,"— if these be not facts, Christianity is a myth and faith is folly. Look at the Apostles' Creed, and you will see that it is simply a series of stupendous gospel facts alleged of one stupendous person. Deny these facts, for the sake of getting rid of difficulty, and you have killed the religion of the cross; nothing is left of it worth thinking about. If, therefore, this study shall re-impress us with the truth that the Christianity of Christ is a series of historical facts, it will certainly be most profitable. It will show us that certain great doctrines, which we have been taught to believe are fundamental, are not the dogmas of superstitious

priests, but are the legitimate and inevitable deductions from these great facts of the past.

There is, moreover, this to be said in favor of what is proposed, viz.: that it will be *profoundly practical.* This is what the age is crying out for. We hear it on every side. "Give us something practical," is the clamor of our times. "Something tangible, something that bears down directly upon the life of to-day." That is the demand of the age, but those who make the cry do not always stop to reflect that nothing can be wholesomely practical that does not come out of principles that reach back to the will of God. How barren in practical results, for example, is infidelity through all its shades and varieties. What reforms does it start? What rivers does it cause to break forth in the desert? What waste places does it transform into beautiful and fruitful gardens of delight? What schools does it plant? What evils does it eradicate? What man on earth to-day has joined the crusade against intemperance, against the saloon-power, against monopoly, against iniquity in high places, because he was inspired by infidelity? And why is it thus barren and useless? Simply because it has no eternal principles to back it up.

But this is what you will find if you look beneath the surface of the great movements that are blessing and purifying society; you will find that back of them, inspiring them, pushing them forward, making them instinct with life and force and beneficence, is the Christianity of Christ. What power is it that is send-

ing young men and women to the interior of Africa, to the idol-cursed lands of India, to the remote and desolate corners of the earth, as messengers of peace and love? What power is it that in our own land, yea, in our own city, is causing men and women to devote their means, their influence, and their lives to lift up the fallen, to cheer the discouraged, to snatch the slaves of sin and vice as brands from the burning and set their faces toward better things? I answer, it is the power that has its origin in the Cross of Christ. As all light and heat come ultimately from the sun, as all rivers come from the ocean, so all the streams of influence that are healing and sweetening the life of the world come in their last analysis from that—

> "Fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

Let it not be imagined, therefore, that in turning back to what Jesus did and taught we shall be turning away from that which is practical and adapted to the life of the hour. Far from it. Far from it. The very opposite is the case. From every point of the compass there comes flaming testimony to the fact that he who would preach a practical religion must never lose sight of the Cross, and that if he would have his people quick to respond to the call of duty, with consciences tender and sensitive, he must keep them in the atmosphere of the gospel. I will tell you the kind of preaching that is of no account. It is the sort that abounds in rhetorical fireworks and oratorical

display, in flowers and fancies, in gush and sentiment. It may entertain an audience, it may win the applause of an hour, people may go home and say, "Wasn't it sweet? Wasn't it beautiful?" and yet all the week long, until the next Sabbath, walk arm in arm with the world. Over such preaching the wind bloweth and it is gone. There is no substance, nothing that will arouse men and women to put their heels upon sin and their hands to the work of the Lord. For practical results, for quickening power, for zeal that will fling its heat from one Lord's day to another, we must turn to the Christianity of Christ. The apostles, you remember, had no elaborate machinery, they had no volumes of learned lore to draw upon, they had no reviews and well-filled periodicals to furnish them with illustrations for sermons, they did not even have the New Testament; all they had was Jesus Christ and Him crucified, but were they not practical? Did they not accomplish wonders? Did they not shake emperors and make kings tremble on their thrones? Yes, brethren, the gospel is practical, and in leading you to what Jesus did and taught I am sure I shall be leading you to something that will bear more directly upon your lives and conduct than anything else can possibly do. I shall be leading you to something that will instruct the mind, soften the conscience, improve the life, cheer the heart, and replenish the lamp of Hope.

There is this to be said in conclusion: I am persuaded that the Christianity of Christ is what the great

majority of you want to hear about. A story is told of a young minister who preached a very learned and eloquent sermon. As a piece of literature it was above criticism. It displayed much study and profound thought. But there was no Christ, no gospel in it, and so at its conclusion some hungering soul sent up to him a little piece of paper with these significant words written upon it, "Sir, we would see Jesus." And that is what all you Christian people are saying to-day. The language of your inmost hearts is—

"We would see Jesus, for the shadows lengthen
Across this little landscape of our life,
We would see Jesus, our weak faith to strengthen
For the last weariness—the final strife.

"We would see Jesus, the great Rock Foundation,
Whereon our feet were set by Sovereign grace,
Not life nor death, with all their agitation,
Can thence remove us, if we see His face."

God help us to hold Him up that you may see Him and find solace and comfort and inspiration in the house of the Lord. I know that some of you are sick and wounded in the battle, and that you want the balm of the gospel. I know that some of you are tired and burdened and long for the shadow of the great Rock in a weary land. I know that some of you are nearing Eternity, already its breath is on your brow, and you want to see Him who is the Lord of death as well as life. Yes, up from every part of the congregation I think I hear voices saying:

"Tell me the old, old story
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His love.

Tell me the story simply,
As to a little child,
For I am weak and weary,
And helpless and defiled."

To tell that story to the best of my ability, to take you back to what Jesus did and taught, to present the gospel as it touches the life which now is and the life which is to come, is what I now attempt more fully, more faithfully, than ever before. And, though it will involve a great deal of hard work, I undertake it with anticipations of delight. For—

"I love to tell the story, more wonderful it seems
Than all the golden fancies of all our golden dreams;
I love to tell the story! It did so much for me!
And that is just the reason I tell it now to thee."

And I ask you, dear brethren, to join with me in your prayers, both here and in your homes, that the telling of it may be the power of God unto the salvation of many souls.

WHAT CHRIST TEACHES US TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.—*John 1:18.*

WHEN the writer affirms that "No man hath seen God at any time," he is not stating an isolated case by any means. It is impossible to see anything that is really great. You see the tree, the flower, the man, but whoever got a glimpse of life? Shakespeare's writings are visible enough, but Shakespeare's genius, Shakespeare's capacious mind—what eye of mortal ever saw that? We have often gone down here to the sea-beach to watch the white-bannered waves charging upon the shore; we have felt the very earth tremble under their dash and shock, but the power that urged them on kept out of sight, and always will.

No man hath seen thought at any time, and yet thought is back of all our libraries, and works of art and splendid buildings and endless contrivances. No man hath seen music at any time, nor could he find it though he were to take the organ to pieces and

scrutinize every part of its mechanism. No man hath seen magnetism at any time, and yet see how the needle is held with point to the pole as if in the grip of an invisible hand. Let us not be disturbed, therefore, when the text declares that "No man hath seen God at any time," for that which is truly great is never seen. A God that we could measure and weigh and photograph would be about as worthless as the Chinaman's wooden idol.

No man hath seen God, and yet God was manifest in the flesh. That may be a mystery, perhaps, but there is certainly no reason why we should stumble over it. How, for example, do you make your thought manifest? You incarnate it, do you not? You bring your idea out of the unseen and give it shape and form in a dress or a book, or a building, or some business enterprise. In other words, your thought must be born in some Bethlehem; it must become flesh, or it never can be known. The same thing is true of love. It is impossible to grasp and appreciate it simply as an idea. It must be brought out and embodied in a breathing frame of flesh and blood. I touch upon this to remind you that when God incarnated himself in Jesus Christ he did what we ourselves are constantly compelled to do on lower lines. He revealed himself by incarnation; so does every one of us.

The meaning of the text is very clear, and no time need be spent in explaining it. It teaches us that the unseen, eternal God, has been revealed by Jesus Christ. "He hath declared him." That is, he hath

set him forth, or made him known. When a scholar interprets or opens up a passage of Scripture so as to bring its hidden meaning to light, he is called an exegete; and that, precisely, is the term used in our text. The invisible has been interpreted to the understanding of the world by the Lord Jesus. Hence, through this interpretation, we must come to a knowledge of God, for there is no other way.

What, then, does Christ teach us to believe concerning God? To answer this inquiry exhaustively, it would be necessary to proceed along two lines of investigation, viz.: Those of his oral instruction, and his life. In other words, we should have to take up for study both the written and the living revelation. But as the latter will come up for consideration in another connection, I shall this morning confine myself to the former. In the light of Christ's own recorded declarations, plain, specific and oft-repeated, what are we to believe concerning God? I trust I realize something of the importance of the question, for the life of every one of us, here and hereafter, will inevitably be shaped by the answer we give to it. The truth is, I feel embarrassed by the very abundance of material that is available. The gospels are full of it. But as a few commanding summits are sufficient to enable us to determine the trend of the mountain range, without going to the labor of inspecting every peak, so a few leading points will be enough to show us the character of God.

First of all, then, Christ teaches us to believe

that *God is a spirit.* So he declared in his conversation with the woman at the well. This he did to show her that God could not be localized, or restricted to any mountain or altar, or monopolized by any special class. He is a spirit—this is his essence—hence he is invisible and everywhere present, in office as well as oratory, in work as well as worship. I know that when we come to talk of spirit we come to something intangible and mysterious, but it need not, therefore, be unprofitable; for we have already seen that the best and greatest things are out of sight.

When our Lord wanted to give even as learned a man as Nicodemus some adequate conception of God as spirit, he made use of a very simple figure, viz.: that of the wind or air, and we can do no better. The air is all about us and in us, and do what we will we cannot get away from it. Though "we cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth," yet wander where we may, into any desolate and remote corner of earth, whatever else may be wanting, we shall still be in most vital connection with the air. Water may fail, food may fail, but we are always and everywhere sure of the air.

No man can have a monopoly of it, and no earthly power can restrict it to any little corner. We pay for our light, we pay for our land, we pay for our fuel, we even pay for our water sometimes, but never for the air. It thrusts itself upon all, poor and rich, bond and free, without money and without price. And not only so, but there is no end to the supply. Though

the whole world is consuming it, there is as much at the close of day as at the beginning, It is mysterious, to be sure, but is there anything more real, more essential? Shut the air out of your lungs for three minutes and you are gone.

Another very suggestive thing in this connection. Make a vessel to hold water, and the water has to be brought to fill it. Prepare fuel and set it in order, and the fire has to be brought to kindle it. Set your table with the most elegant china, or silver, but the food will never come until somebody goes after it. The air, however, is far more accommodating. All you have to do is to make space for it and it will be on hand.

There may be death in your house. It may be filled with poisonous gases, but if you will throw it open, if you will lift the windows and swing wide the doors, the sweet, pure air will rush in, laden with life and health. You need not be an expert in science and understand all about the laws of ventilation to understand that. Just trust the wind, remove the barriers, let it come in, and all the foul exhalations will make way for it, and your house will be sweetened and purified.

So, you see, when the Lord teaches us that God is spirit, and then uses the air as a symbol to bring the thought down to the level of our comprehension, he teaches us something most practical and beautiful. What royal bounty, what boundless provision, what fullness and freeness it suggests for all the wants of

our nature. As spirit he touches every life, he presses upon every heart, he waits for us to make room for him that he may enter in to cleanse and bless.

Again, Christ teaches us to believe that *God's attitude toward this sinful world is one of love.* In words that condense into a single sentence the whole marrow of the gospel he declares that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Instead of standing apart and leaving the world to meet the consequences of its sin and guilt, his whole nature went out toward it in love and pity. He sent the Son of his bosom, his only begotten Son, that "the world through him might be saved." In other words, the eternal God himself became flesh, he entered into vital union with our humanity, and voluntarily subjected himself to shame and sorrow and agony and crucifixion and the dark, lonely shadows of the grave to convince wandering, rebellious men of his love.

It is an old story, I know, but it will bear repeating, and be fresh and sweet until the last tempest-tossed wanderer has rounded the cape and cast anchor in the Port of Peace. Yes, it will inspire the songs of glory while the ages of eternity roll. I trust I may never be charged with neglecting to exalt the cross. I would lift it up and make it so attractive and inviting that every poor sinner might be induced to flee to its shelter. I would like every man to build his house on the Rock that was riven, and from Calvary's sum-

mit look out upon the contending forces of this sin-smitten earth. But at the same time I would have every man remember that Jesus Christ taught that back of Calvary, back of that stupendous sacrifice, is the yearning, infinite love of God, as the fountain is back of the stream. To make this truth plain, to impress it upon the heart of mankind, was the burden of all his lessons from his baptism to his death. This is the supreme, the crowning thought of the gospel, that God's love is the spring out of which flows salvation with all that it signifies.

Passing on a step, let me say in the next place, that Christ teaches us to believe that *God is merciful.* This, of course is, so to speak, but a ray of his love, but it will help us to look at it separately. In the course of his Sermon on the Mount he said to his disciples: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Again and again our Saviour emphasizes this trait of God's character. He quotes from the Old Testament to show that God loves mercy rather than sacrifice. He sets it forth in the parable of the talents, and with a pathos and beauty that will never die in the parable of the Prodigal Child. He teaches us to believe that God delights in mercy, and that waves of joy surge through his being when he sees a sinner returning to the shelter of his love. He offers it to all as freely as he gives the sunshine and the air. There are some who think that if they were in the church and professed to be christians, that his mercy would be vouchsafed; but as they are only sin-

ners, only aliens and wanderers, they feel that they dare not go to God. They keep no account in the bank of divine compassion, and hence they conclude that their check will not be honored if they present it.

But they can make no greater mistake. He delights in mercy, fellowmen, and does not wait for you to turn and repent before he loves you. His love ante-dates all reformation, all regeneration. There is not a thief, not a gambler, not a drunkard, not a soul burning up with bad passions, who has not a right to look up out of the midst of his guilt and say "God help me, God be merciful to me, a sinner." Your vice, your iniquity, your poor sin-smitten life, is not a reason for keeping away from God. Nay, it is the very reason why you should go to him, just as a man's disease is the reason why he should seek the physician.

No matter how deep the guilt, no matter how black the sin, no matter how low a man may have fallen, he need never despair of the mercy of God. In the great storm that raged along the Atlantic coast a year or so ago, we are told that immense rocks were carried up the beach in the arms of the waves and deposited far inland on solid ground. So I care not how vile a sinner a man may be, Christ teaches us to believe that the waves of God's mercy can carry him right up to the safe, immovable, eternal shore. A story is told of a Senator of Athens who, when a poor chased sparrow sought refuge in his bosom, dashed it from him to the ground and put out its life; whereupon it was ordered by the Senate that he should die

himself. They wouldn't have a man of that temper in their honorable body. Blessed be God, no poor, hunted soul that seeks shelter in his bosom will ever be cast away. "His mercy endureth forever," and if in a million years from now a lost soul should come imploring that mercy, it would throw its sheltering wing over him at once, and the armies of heaven would thrust themselves between him and the powers of sin.

We trim our night-lamps, we watch our little earth-lights, lest they go out and leave us in the dark; but we have no anxiety about the sun failing, or the air becoming exhausted. So we need not fear that God's mercy will ever fail. Only let us fear that our disposition to ask for it may cease; that is quite possible. God will always be as merciful as he is to-day, but his mercy may cease to be available by and by through sin and neglect.

Notwithstanding the fact that hard by the city lies the lake with all its boundless supply fed by mountain streams; notwithstanding the fact that it was there before ever a human footprint was left on the plains, and will be there when the city's glory shall have crumbled to the dust; yet if the householder shuts up his water-pipes and keeps them shut until encrusted with rust and filled with sediment so that not a drop of water can get through, he cannot blame the water. The fault is entirely his own. There is no limit to the water supply, but he has cut himself off from it, and must face the consequences.

So God's mercy is boundless, from everlasting to everlasting, but it cannot come into the soul that has become thoroughly hardened by sin and by repeated refusals to listen to the still, small voice. Hence, while the thought of God's mercy is full of hope and inspiration, the thought that a man may put himself beyond its reach is full of warning, and ought to arouse from his lethargy every indifferent, careless person here to-day.

Still farther, Christ teaches us to believe that *God is our Father*. How constantly he keeps this blessed truth in the front you all know. The Sermon on the Mount is full of it. Fifteen times it is referred to in that brief discourse, and each reference shows us the Father from a somewhat different angle. There is so much under this head that might be said, that I select but two or three points for special emphasis.

First, Christ teaches us to believe that as a Father God is *thoroughly impartial*. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." The sun takes just as much pains with the Canada thistle or the dog-weed as it does with the apple tree or the splendid oak. It is just as friendly, just as kind to the cockle as to the wheat; to the rank mullen stock by the wayside as to the grapevine in the arbor. It shines upon the cotter's cabin with no less bounty than upon the prince's palace. The sun makes no distinctions; there isn't the slightest favoritism about it; it has no special regard to show in special places. On it shines, diffus-

ing itself through the air, and pours itself without partiality and in endless abundance upon all things. Thus it is a beautiful emblem of our Father in heaven who "maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

He does this as a Father. The true parent looks upon his children, and the parental feeling overcomes any differences of talent or appearance there may be in them. One may be more gifted, more handsome, more promising than another, but whatever tincture of favoritism there may be on the surface, comprehensively he looks upon them all and loves them all as his own dear children. I like to think that God is impartial, that his great heart flows out toward me just as freely, just as indiscriminately as toward the most exalted saint that ever lifted a prayer to heaven. He loves you just as much as he did Paul, and John, and Peter, though you may not be able to contain as much of his love as they did. The receiving vessel may be smaller. The currant bush cannot absorb as much of the sunshine as the wide-spreading maple; but each gets all it can dispose of. So God's love to you and me is limited only by our capacity to receive.

Most sweetly does our Lord illustrate the impartiality of the Father's love in the parable of the prodigal. Both boys were loved with all the love of the Father's heart. The boy who wandered away no less than the boy that stayed at home. One, however, was loved with the love of compassion; the other with the love of com-

placency. But any interpretation of the parable that does not give to each an equal place in the Father's affection, I believe to be wrong. Christ teaches us to believe that God loves the sinner, the debauchee down in the gutter, not one whit less than he loves the Christian kneeling at the altar; though of course he does not and he cannot take equal pleasure in them.

Christ, moreover, teaches us to believe that as our Father *God is interested in every phase and item of our experience.* "Consider the lilies." "Behold the fowls of the air." If God cares for them, and is interested in them, think not that he will neglect you, "O, ye of little faith." He declares that the very hairs of your heads are numbered. I know that it is difficult for us to realize that God can bestow his attention upon such little things. They seem too trifling, too utterly beneath him. The idea that the eternal God who made the world and holds the stars in the hollow of his hand, should not only stoop to think of every individual man, but should be interested in every incident of his experience, and that his sympathy attends every step of human life—that idea when you look at it in the light of his greatness does seem extravagant. It seems out of the question.

But when we reflect that he is our Father, that he sustains to us the the parental relation, we can see that it must be so. We all know how a kind earthly parent abandons himself to his little, toddling child. No matter how dignified he may be in society, no matter how stately and cultured and self-poised, one appeal of

that little darling breaks him all up, and he is down on the floor in an instant, as much absorbed in the trifles of the child as he was awhile ago in the greater affairs of the wide world. Well, now take that parenthood and enlarge it away on all sides until it becomes infinite, yet retaining all its parental instincts, and I think you can understand how God may have an interest in you, and in all your little trials and difficulties. That he has is most clearly taught by our Lord, and I would have every one lay the sweet lesson to heart and take it out into the din and rush and battle of life. You are his child, however lowly, however sinful and unworthy; and as the mountain puts its strong shoulder under the modest, delicate flower as freely as under the tall pine, so God carries in his bosom the feeblest as well as the strongest.

I realize that I have only touched my subject at two or three points, but time presses, and I must stop. God is spirit, God is love, God is Father. Thus he is the author of our existence, the quickener of our moral nature, the Saviour of our souls. In him we live, and move, and have our being. Has he not, then, some claim upon our lives? When the voice no longer needs the singer, when the ray can shine without the lamp, when the stream can flow without the fountain, we shall be independent of God, but not till then. In view, therefore, of what he is, in view of the life he gives and sustains, in view of all his fatherly care and tenderness, shall we not acknowledge his claims and give him henceforth the homage of our hearts?

WHAT CHRIST TEACHES US TO BELIEVE ABOUT HIMSELF.

"Whom makest thou thyself?"—*John*, 8:53

Some forty years ago, when gold was first discovered in California, and the excitement swept over the country like a contagion, men were not content with the rumors and reports that filled the air, but away they started, some across the mountains, some by the way of Panama and some around Cape Horn, to see the famous El Dorado for themselves. What they read and heard only kindled their desire and filled them with a determination never to stop till they got to headquarters and saw with their own eyes and held in their own hands the precious dust. Speaking after the manner of the world that was wise, for men certainly cannot accumulate earthly riches by feeding upon current stories and popular talk. Hearsay may be interesting and even thrilling, but nobody is ever enriched by it.

Now, if men would only act toward spiritual things as the gold-seekers did toward things secular; if they

would but say, " Yes, we are thankful for all we have heard and read *about* Christ; we are grateful for every description we have seen of him, but we can never rest until we see the original and hear what he has to say about himself." If people would thus insist upon going to the very heart and center of christianity at once, instead of stopping at literary and ecclesiastical half-way houses, as they are too much inclined to do, the world would have a different story to rehearse, and its pulse would beat with higher hopes and loftier ambitions.

An artificial flower may be very good as an imitation, and there may be a certain sort of beauty about it, but to form any true appreciation of a real rose you must go to the garden where it blooms in all the sweet loveliness of nature. In like manner, to form any adequate conception of Him, who is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, we must look at him as he blooms in the garden of the gospel. The great difficulty with multitudes is that they are too prone to be content with copies and reports and imitations. They are satisfied to take their theological furniture as it comes to them from the factory, all carved and polished and painted, without going to the trouble of pushing back to the primitive tree out of which it came. The true student, however, the sincere inquirer, can never rest until he gets as near as possible to the roots of things.

This morning we are to take a look, here and there, at what Christ teaches us to believe concerning him-

self. Not in the mood of the Scribes and Pharisees, in no spirit of carping criticism, are we to ask: "Whom makest Thou thyself?" but as devout inquirers we come, I trust, to learn from his own lips who he is and what relation he claims to sustain toward men. We strike out the elements of time and distance, and for a few minutes we are to imagine ourselves in old Judea, following him from place to place in the company of his disciples, sitting at his feet, drinking in his words, receiving his instruction; and, from what we see and hear, we are to form our opinions as to what he makes himself to be.

At the very outset we are profoundly impressed. He is so calm, so gentle, so self-controlled. Never for a moment does he yield to excitement. No matter what turbulence there may be about him his tranquility is always the same. He is solemn, like one charged with infinite responsibility; as dignified as a king, yet as approachable as a little child. The dew of youth is on his brow, while at the same time he has all the maturity and wisdom of age. Sometimes he comes so near that the weary head is tempted to recline upon his bosom. Then in a moment he is far away, as if in communion with other worlds. Now men shrink from him as from a consuming fire, and anon, they are attracted to him as to a garden of delights. Now his eye weeps in pity, and now it flashes with awful indignation. Now his voice is full of tears and compassion, and, in its accent, poor sinners hear the music of hope. Now it pierces like a two-edged sword.

We notice that he is loved as never man was loved, and hated with all the malignity of hell. There is no affectation, no putting on airs. We feel that he is truth itself, and so we go with him to see if from his own words and actions we can make him out.

We learn very early that he puts himself forward as *the Great Teacher*. He sits down on the hill-side, and, as we range ourselves beneath him on the green slopes, he begins his incomparable lessons. Beatitude after beatitude drops from his lips with such simple eloquence that we are riveted to the spot. Then he calls us the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and carries our poor human life up into most exalted meanings, and shows us what vast possibilities lie along our path. Under such talk our hearts beat faster and our whole nature expands, like a flower wooed and kissed by the sun.

Passing from that he begins to talk about the law and the prophets. He assures us that they were not temporary expedients brought forward to help the world over a tight place, but that they are to stand until heaven and earth pass away, and that he came to fulfil them and make them glorious. He takes the local and broadens it away into the universal; takes love, which was a very narrow and one-sided affair, and throws it around enemies and haters and persecutors and all the sons of men, as the sun throws its light over the evil and the good. Thus he leads us on, talking about alms-giving and prayer, about entering in at the strait gate and laying up treasure in

heaven; about judging men by their fruits and not by their words, and reaches the climax of it all by declaring that the man who builds upon these sayings of his builds upon a rock that never can be shaken. We are sorry to have him close so soon, for we fain would hear more.

But now, descending with him from the mountain, we are even more charmed and astonished at what we see in the plain. Here we behold him setting himself forth as *the Great Physician*. This brings him a little closer. We look and behold he cleanses a leper, actually takes the loathsome creature by the hand; nobody else on earth would do it, but he does it with more than a mother's tenderness, and that touch thrills the poor man with life and health and hope, and fills all his sky with light. He starts with the worst possible case first. After that we are not surprised to see him heal palsy and fever and all manner of disease. When we see the joy that springs up in his track over banished pain and restored strength there comes to our mind an old passage of scripture, and with Matthew we say, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."

But we see more. He not only heals the body but the mind. He casts out devils. He cleanses the soul. On the rocky shore of Galilee we saw him deal with a man who had his dwelling among the tombs, an exceeding fierce man, the terror of the whole neighborhood, who, in his paroxysms of madness, cut himself with stones and uttered the most hideous cries.

But we heard Jesus say : " Come out of him thou unclean spirit," and the effect was instantaneous and marvelous. At once his mental balance was restored. At once the wild man, whom everybody had feared, was clothed and in his right mind and as tractable as a child. Thus this wonderful man makes himself not only master of physical but of spiritual disorders as well.

As we continue in his company we very soon learn that his relation to man is more intimate, more precious and blessed still. One day at Jerusalem he strikes a higher and nobler key than any he has struck yet. He calls himself the Good Shepherd. As he unfolds that idea in one of his matchless talks, we are more impressed than ever with the tenderness, the sympathy, the absolute self-forgetfulness of this Jesus. We hear him say that he is going to lay down his life for the sheep. We don't exactly understand it, but we know that it is just what the true shepherd often does. And as he hints of other sheep which are not of this fold, our vision seems to enlarge, and we get glimpses of great flocks which, in some favored day, are going to follow him and lie down at noon in the green pastures. To be sure our minds are clouded, but the clouds are luminous, with a strange light breaking through which speaks of bright skies and glories to come.

On another occasion, with publicans and sinners all around him, with the fallen, the outcast, the wandering, the homeless, looking up into his face through

their tears and despair, he becomes almost dramatic as he tells what a great-hearted shepherd does when he misses one sheep from the fold. He leaves the ninety and nine, goes out over the sharp rocks and through stinging briars, and never stops till he finds it. Then, instead of *driving* the poor lame, wounded thing back, he lifts it to his shoulders, carries it home rejoicing, and is so glad that he calls in all his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. When the story is ended we know that Jesus himself is the great-hearted shepherd.

His talk is getting to be pathetic, and as it grows in pathos it grows in significance, until pretty soon the humble teacher, the tender physician, the good shepherd likens himself to a father, running out with eager haste to meet the returning prodigal, taking him to his heart without one chiding word, and filling all the house with jubilee because the erring boy is home once more. While we wonder what it all means, and are more and more amazed at the audacity of his claims, there crowds upon us the thought that all the time, little by little, he has been leading us up to the sublime, the inspiring conception that he is more than teacher, more than physician, more than shepherd, more than father even. In one word, that he is the saviour of sinners. This is what he has been preparing us for all along.

Saviour.—That is the name that gathers into itself and explains every other name. Now we know what he meant when he talked about

the safety of the man who built upon the Rock. Now we know what he was seeking to impress when he cleansed the leper and cast out devils, and called himself Teacher and Shepherd. Now it is clear enough what he intended to convey when he spoke about healing the broken hearted, preaching deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, and setting at liberty them that are bruised. Now we understand what he meant when he said: "I am the door;" "I am the way, the truth and the life;" "no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

In every talk, in every story, in every illustration, he was giving us hints of his Saviour-hood. His cures, his compassions, his miracles, his nights of prayer and days of toil, all were but scattered rays of which this is the sun. All were but fragments, a few drops as it were of the one great fountain of redeeming love. We take his several sayings, that he "has power on earth to forgive sins." "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost." "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." We take these sayings of his, and scores of others of like import might be quoted, and, putting them all together, he leaves us no room to doubt that he makes himself to be the only Saviour of

sinners. To this postion we are bound to come or discard every chapter of the gospel story. He is either Saviour or nothing.

But by *what power and authority does he save?* He takes special pains to set our minds at rest on this point. We hear him say again and again in terms which cannot be misunderstood that he is God. In the same talk in which he called himself the Good Shepherd he said: "I and my Father are one." Standing under the very shadow of the cross he says to poor Philip, who felt that if he could only see the Father he would be satisfied: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Jehovah, the Hebrew name for the Eternal, he does not hesitate to apply to himself. Thus, "Before Abraham was, *I am*." One day, entering into conversation with the woman at the well, she said: "I know that Messias cometh," and, quick as a flash, he replied: "I that speak unto thee am He." Again, because Peter confesses him to be the Christ—the Son of the living God—he blesses him and bestows upon him peculiar honor. It is plain; therefore, that he makes himself to be God, and it is, by virtue of his divinity, that he is the Saviour, for only the divine can save.

But if he teaches us to believe that he is God he is no less emphatic in teaching us to beleive that he is man. He is born of woman, grows up in a Judean home, works in the carpenter shop, toils and suffers, hungers and thirsts, eats and sleeps, labors and grows weary, just like us, and because he is like us—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

And his humanity is just as essential to his Saviour-hood as his divinity. God the infinite, God the eternal, filling all space with his presence, lies utterly beyond our utmost thought. To know him and love him he must descend to the level of our comprehension. If he loves us we must see his love so embodied that we can understand it. Had he written his love upon the sun and blazed it from every star and thundered it in the boom of the ocean, you and I never could have grasped it until we saw it living and acting, suffering and sympathizing, in a human life. So, blessed be his name, he stooped to our condition. He met us on the plain of our own being. He emptied himself of his glory and became manifest in the flesh.

See how his two-fold nature is constantly emphasized in the Gospel. As man he feels the pangs of hunger; as God he feeds five thousand in the desert and calls himself "the bread which cometh down from heaven." As man his lips are parched with thirst; as God he stands up and cries: "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." As man he is weary and has not where to lay his head. As God he says: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." As man he sleeps on the hinder part of a fishing boat; as God, at the appeal of the disciples, he rises, rebukes the wind and the sea, and there is a great calm. Thus, his own words leave us no room to doubt that he wants us to believe that he is both God and man. That in him

divinity and humanity are mysteriously blended in two distinct natures, but in perfect unity.

I do not pretend to understand it, but in nature I find an analogy that helps me to accept it. The Gulf Stream, for example, is a great river flowing through the Atlantic. It is so clearly defined that men have traced it and mapped out its course. No matter how the winds may blow it never loses its identity. There it is; always setting in the same direction, always doing the same work, as faithful as the stars. And yet, the ocean and the Gulf Stream are not two but one. I can't understand it. It is a mystery to me why they don't mix and become absolutely lost, one in the other. I only know that there they are, always two and always one, the Gulf Stream in the ocean and the ocean in the Gulf Stream. So it is with the dual nature of our Lord, in which I devoutly and joyfully beleive, because he himself has so plainly set it forth. He is thus in God and God in him, in order that his combined divinity and humanity he may be the *Saviour of Sinners.* This does not clear away the mystery, but it does give us the reason for the fact, God was manifested, says John, " that he might take away our sins." In other words, that he might be our Saviour. And this pre-eminently is what he makes himself to be—*the Saviour.*

And now, having followed him thus far, having listened to his wondrous words and startling claims, let us continue with him to the end and see how this devoted life is going to pass away. We notice that

his face grows more solemn, that his earnestness becomes more intense, that his love for sinners seems to burn with a whiter heat, that his speech gleams like a pure river, holding in its bosom thrilling images and reflections of the sky, and that his words broaden away into meanings that embrace all the future. We have had hints of it before, but here, in these closing days, he makes the astounding declaration that he is the contemporary of all ages. He tells us that it is expedient for him to go, but that he will, nevertheless, be with us always. He tells us that he is going to prepare a place for us and that he will come again. He tells us about the judgment, about sitting on the throne of his glory and coming in the clouds of heaven. He tells us that all nations shall be gathered before him and that he will separate them one from another as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. He tells us of falling stars, of a darkened sun, of the moon withholding her light, of the powers of heaven being shaken, of the sea and waves roaring, and, as he draws the graphic picture, he cries: "Be ready; watch and pray, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

Hardly, however, have the words fallen from his lips when there transpires the strangest, saddest scene of all. I tremble to touch the immortal tragedy with my poor syllables, lest I should spoil it. The Teacher is arrested and the school is closed. The Great Physician is snatched away from his God-like work by the cruel hands of human hate. The Good Shepherd

is a prisoner and the sheep are scattered. We look and behold he stands there before his accusers, quiet as a statue, firm as a rock, yet unresisting as a lamb. We look again, and they spit upon him and scourge him and mock him and turn his sorrows and agonies into holiday joy. Once more we look, and, through our blinding tears, we see the fainting, bleeding, exhausted sufferer staggering away toward Calvary.

Now the place of skulls is reached, and now, while they drive the nails and thrust the grim, cruel cross into the stony ground, there goes up such a prayer as never before or since fell on the ear of heaven. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Up goes the accursed instrument of torture, and behold an awful gloom loads down the sky with darkness. The solid rocks throb and crack as if they feel the pain of the tremendous hour. The great clouds, hanging low, seem to be filled with innumerable eyes peering through, and in the moaning winds we seem to hear the sighs of invisible throngs as they look upon the fearful tragedy. Then a cry of orphanage—of infinite desolation—pierces the burdened air, to be followed in a little while by a ringing cry of victory. "It is finished," and the tragedy is over.

"Love's redeeming work is done,
The battle fought, the victory won."

Now the light comes back; now the blue heavens smile again upon the earth, and, in a day or two, this very Christ who was slain stands yonder on a moun-

tain, just as he stood in the beginning, issuing his commands like a king, speaking great words of love, saying good-by to his disciples, when lo! stepping into a chariot of cloud, he vanishes from mortal sight, until the end of the age, when he shall come again as he went. Even so come Lord Jesus.

Now, does anyone ask: "Lord, whom makest thou thyself?" With that life spread out before you the answer must be plain. By all the lessons he taught, by all the burdens he carried, by all the broken hearts he healed, by all the captives he delivered, by all the wanderers he reclaimed, by all the victories he won, he teaches us to believe that he is the Saviour of men.

And, I presume, we all do believe it in a general sort of a way. But I would like every one of us to make it personal. I would like every one of us to say: "This Jesus, who raises the dead and conquers the grave, and cleanses the leper, and carries people in his arms when the road is rough and the hill is steep, and the wind is sharp and the night is dark, and welcomes poor sinners to his breast. This Jesus, so kingly, yet so tender; so almighty, yet so gentle; so divine, yet so human; this Jesus whose heart burst and poured out its sacred blood for me; this Jesus is mine. I cannot, I will not, live without him. He is all the God I want. I look no higher, for beside him there is none else, and from this day I take him to be *my* Saviour. Who among you will say that and come with us two weeks from to-day to the commun-

ion, to joyfully confess him before men and publicly take your stand beneath the banner of the cross?

You can easily find fault with us who profess his name. We give you far too much ground for criticism. We know, and sorrowfully confess, that our lives are fitful, spasmodic, unsteady, inconsistent, sometimes true and sometimes false. These lower lights burn dimly and uncertainly, and sometimes seem to flicker out entirely. You can easily find fault with the church. She humbly owns that she does not begin to be what she ought to be. She goes too much with the world and gets her feet blistered and her robes stained by walking in forbidden paths. Her wheat is not free from chaff. Her gold is mixed with alloy. Her noblest works are tainted with selfishness. But, "what think ye of Christ?" Have you any fault to find with him? Oh, I would, that you might be so impressed with his beauty, his purity, his Saviour-hood, as to step over the line of indifference, of fear, of hesitancy, and make his people your people, his aims your aims, his life your life, and his glory your glory.

WHAT CHRIST TEACHES AS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

John, 16: 7-15.

While the Holy Spirit is very frequently referred to in the Old Testament, his person and work are dwelt upon with special fulness in the New. Every careful reader of the gospels and epistles knows how constantly the Spirit is spoken of in one relation or another, and especially from the time of the Savior's farewell talk with his disciples in the upper room on to the end of the volume. A distinguished student of the Scriptures has called our attention to the fact that the whole movement of the Bible is toward spirituality. We see it in the order of creation, moving up step by step, until it culminates in man. We see it in the Levitical ritual, and in offerings and sacrifices, in types and shadows, which have their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. We see it in the order of the gospels, beginning with the matter-of-fact Matthew and closing with the heavenly-minded John, who keeps us all the time on the sun-

lighted summits. Hence it seems as natural that the Scriptures should reach their culmination in the dispensation of the Spirit as that the bud should enfold into the flower.

I am well aware that when we come to talk about the Holy Spirit we come to something that is intangible and mysterious; something which to many minds seems too vague and shadowy to be of any interest and importance, and this, perhaps, is the reason why the subject is so often passed over in silence. But whatever may be our feeling as to the matter, we are bound to admit that our Lord and His Apostles made a great deal of it; that they considered the Holy Spirit's presence the one thing, above all others, indispensable.

To be sure, we cannot explain the influences of the Spirit; they are past finding out. But so are the movements of the wind. We see its effects, we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. But the influence of the Spirit is no more mysterious than a thousand other influences. I do not know how one man can so speak or sing as to stir to tears, or soothe and quiet the soul of another. I do not know how strains of music can take hold of a man and lift him up into an atmosphere of hope and joy; or how the rustling of the leaves in autumn, or the sighing of the trees under the touch of the north wind fills him with the feeling of melancholy. I do not know how certain emotions in me can awaken similar emotions in you. What is it that moves us to weep with those who weep and rejoice with

those who rejoice? How does a mother pour her affection upon the heart of her child? How is it that some force from the outer world carries us away down into the valley of gloom to-day, and another force carries us up to the hill of light to-morrow? We cannot tell. We only know that these things are so. But if these secret forces of nature and life should so affect us why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should move upon us by his Holy Spirit? For my part it seems most unreasonable that men who live and move and have their being in mystery should insist upon having all mystery cleared away when they come to religion. I cannot help but feel that it is done too often simply as a pretext for standing out against the claims of the Savior of the world. In considering what Christ teaches us to believe concerning the Holy Spirit we shall proceed in the following order: First—*What the Spirit is.* Second—*Where the Spirit is,* and Third—*What the Spirit does.*

1. First, then, *What is the Spirit?* I have just been using the word influence, and the word force, and these terms, especially the first, are often used in connection with the Holy Ghost. So often, indeed, that I fear some of us are misled by them. There is nothing more common, for example, than to hear Christian people, of many years standing even, use the impersonal pronoun *it* in referring to the Spirit. This arises, no doubt, from the habit of regarding the Holy Ghost as an influence or an emanation from God, and not as an actual person.

But to get rid of all confusion on this point it is only necessary to turn to the language of our Lord. According to Christ, the Holy Spirit "reproves," "guides," "teaches," "comforts," "leads into all truth," "testifies," "brings to remembrance" and "endues with power." To say these things of an influence would of course be absurd. Besides, it is to be noticed that in speaking of the Spirit, Christ invariably uses the personal pronoun "He," "Him," "whom," etc.

In the fourth of Luke, quoting from Isaiah, he says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach." He could hardly say that of an influence. Again, take the following passage, which has troubled so many: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven." A thing, an emanation, cannot be sinned against. It would be just as sensible to talk about sinning against a stone wall as against an influence. An influence cannot think, or feel, or suffer. The words of Christ, therefore, leave us no alternative. He certainly teaches us to believe in the proper personality of the Holy Ghost.

Not only so, but he teaches us that as a person the Holy Ghost is coequal with himself. Thus, if I say: "I am a Christian and you are another, I affirm that you are likewise a Christian. If I declare that I am an American citizen and you are another, behind that word "another" your citizenship is averred also. So when Jesus says: "I will pray the Father, and He shall

send you another Comforter," he puts the Holy Spirit in the same class and on the same footing with himself.

This thought will become clearer if we bear in mind that the Spirit was to take Christ's place. It was said of Beecher, before he departed this life, that no one could ever fill his pulpit. It was felt that every one who came after him to speak from the platform of Plymouth Church would be very much in the situation of a school-boy trying to stand in the shoes of a king; or like a sapling attempting to occupy the place made vacant by the falling of a sky-piercing pine. The same thing has often been said of Spurgeon. When such a man steps off the stage it is no easy matter to find a worthy and competent successor. There never has been but one Shakspeare, but one Paganini, but one Raphael. Ulysses' bow could be bent by no mortal but Ulysses, and when such men leave us their weapons can be handled and their places filled only by those of equal genius and calibre and power.

But if that is true of these men to whom I have just referred, how much more is it true of the Christ of God? He had been preaching as never man had preached. His words had thrilled over the hills of Judea and stirred the people and burned into their very souls. Their tenderness, their pathos, their ring of authority, their wisdom and force had called forth the unqualified testimony that "never man spake like this man." When the day came, therefore, for our Lord to vacate His pulpit who should fill it? What must be the quality, the capacity, the temper of the

person sent to stand in the office of Jesus Christ and take up the work where He left it? Could anybody do it who was His inferior? But He declares that even greater things shall be done because of the advent of the Spirit than ever He himself had done; and so we must conclude that the Holy Spirit is not only a person, but the equal of the Son of God.

II. Let us pass now to consider just for a moment what Christ teaches us to believe as to where the Spirit is. I trust that what I am saying may not be regarded as dull and uninteresting. To Christians at least this subject should be profoundly practical, for it has to do with the very fountain of all their religious growth and zeal and work and life. Speaking of the Spirit, Jesus says: "If I depart I will send him unto you." Again He says: "He shall abide with you forever."

Jesus goes to heaven, the Spirit comes to earth. Jesus goes to the right hand of the Father Almighty, the Spirit comes into the world to be a quickening, living presence among men, especially in the hearts of believers. When Jesus was here in the flesh the Father said: "This is my beloved Son, hear him." But after his ascension Jesus speaks out of the skies and says: "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." As certainly, therefore, as the Son of God is there, so certainly is the Spirit of God here.

He is here in two senses; first as the air, which is universally diffused, and, second, as water, which is not equal everywhere, coming and going as it listeth,

but flows in certain channels like our streams or rivers. In the first sense, His presence enswathes every life, presses upon every soul, hovers about every religious assembly, and all we have to do is to open our hearts to Him and He will come in to abide with us forever. In the second sense, He has already come in, He has poured himself into the empty vessel which has made room for Him, so that the person thus filled becomes a fountain of blessing to others, or as it is in the prophecy, "rivers of water in a dry place."

Thus, while the Spirit is all about us He is present as a vitalizing and inspiring force only in the lives of true disciples. His real seat of energy is in every little church whose members have had their hearts cleansed and given up to his indwelling; and if in any particular church he is not a moving, propelling energy it is because its members are filled with other things. I have seen water in the shape of mist hang, dense and heavy, over hill and plain. Every tree and flower was wrapped in it as in a shroud, but its weight was not felt. It didn't move the smallest machine, it didn't sway a branch or tip a leaf. And I have seen water in the shape of a stream sweep down the valley, turning mill after mill, causing the wheels of industry to spin, and bearing many a craft of commerce to the sea, everywhere the very embodiment of life and power. Thus, while the mist was as truly water as the stream, it was water without concentration, water without a channel, and therefore it was weak, inoperative, and practically useless. Brethren, let us take

the lesson home. The Holy Spirit is here and everywhere, he broods over all the world, but he manifests himself in Pentecostal power only when there are certain well-defined channels for him to move in.

Those channels are Christian hearts and Christian churches. Is there any reason why they should not be our hearts and our church?

III. But, without tarrying longer here, let me ask your attention to what Christ teaches us to believe the Spirit does. There is so much that might be said here that I shall have to confine myself to those points which are most salient and practical.

1. The first thing He will do, says Christ, is to convince the world of sin. That is fundamental. Unless a man is thoroughly persuaded that he is a sinner he will never call upon the Savior. If the field of the soul is ever to yield golden sheaves for God it must first be cut and torn by the plowshare of conviction. But that is no easy matter. I can show you sin in the bud and flower and describe it when it comes to the fruitage, but to take you back to its secret beginnings, to the germ out of which it came, is quite beyond me. All men, for example, who have a spark of nobility left in them, condemn murder; but all men do not condemn the unholy anger in which the bloody crime had its start. Every decent man denounces falsehood, and does not hesitate to say that the liar should not be tolerated in respectable society. But that very decent man himself may act a lie, and live a lie, and do it so constantly that it comes to be the steady habit of his

years. When a man gets in that condition, the only agent that can reach him is the lightning of God. Human words will fall upon his ear with no more effect than hailstones on the rock.

Here is a man who to all appearances has been very benevolent. He has made a large donation to some worthy cause. He did it cheerfully, and with manifestations of delight. The people praise him in the gates and leading articles are written to extol him. Many a heart has been made glad by the gift. On the outside it was very beautiful, and that is as far as the human eye can see. But the Spirit comes, and holds the candle of the Lord over the secret places of that man's heart; he searches his motives, and says to the much-eulogized giver: "Your soul was not in your offering. It was a bribe by which you bought a large place among men. It was a sacrifice to your own vanity. You were not thinking of doing good, but only of yourself." Certain it is that in such a case as this the Holy Spirit must undertake the work, or it never will be done. The truth is, our very almsgiving may be mockery; our very prayers may be a lie, and our very religion the high-water-mark of our iniquity. Hence the absolute need of the Spirit to keep the conscience sensitive, the inner eye keen, and to show us sin, not in the outward act, but in the hiding-places of the soul.

2. The second thing the Spirit will do, says Christ, is to teach, to guide you into the truth. If I were to say: "Musical things are musically discerned," you

would give your assent very readily. No man can see into music who hasn't a musical eye—a musical soul—a nature attuned to harmonious sounds. Mathematical things are mathematically discerned. Poetical things are poetically discerned. Artistic things are artistically discerned. Here there is no disagreement. But when we say "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned," there are those who charge us with indulging in mystical nonsense or something of that sort. But if to understand and appreciate music, or art, or poetry, or any great and high study, we must bring to it a kindred sympathy, why should not the same thing hold true of the Scriptures? I do not stop to argue the matter. I am content to stand on the rock of the Savior's instruction. We need a Teacher, and that teacher is the Holy Ghost, who has come to guide us into all truth.

Who taught D. L. Moody so that whenever he opens the word of God to the people they see treasures which they never saw before? Who taught many a pious old saint, that never saw the inside of a college, and made him wiser in the Scriptures than many a learned, book-worn man, who has gone through all the schools? It was the blessed Comforter whom Jesus Christ sent in His own name. There are some lessons which can be learned only in the school of the Holy Ghost, and to know the Bible is one of them. I wish that thought might be burned into all of our hearts.

Suppose you see a man at midnight trying to understand a sun-dial. He has a lamp in his hand, and,

holding it up, he tries to trace the figures on the face of the dial. He looks at it, and studies it, and examines it with the utmost diligence, and the result is that while he gains a pretty accurate knowledge of the structure, he complains that he can't understand its purpose. He can't see its practical use. But you tell him to wait till the sun is up. He does so, and in its clear shining he sees not only what he saw before, but that the dial was intended to point out the hours of the day. Well, friends, the word of God can no more be understood in its spirit and purpose without the Holy Ghost than the sun-dial can be understood without the sun.

3. Another thing Christ says about the Spirit is that he brings to remembrance, quickens the memory. Many a man has gone on living in sin, grasping after the things of this life, accumulating treasures that rust and decay, so busy with his muck-rate that he could not see the crown that hung above his head, when suddenly some lesson of long ago, some nursery song, some verse learned on his mother's knee, flashed back through his soul and led him to consecrate himself to God. Yes, many a man has been arrested in his mad career by a memory stirred and quickened by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, I think this re-awakening of the recollection always takes place before a man turns his face toward his Father's house.

Some of us need it. We need to have old vows, trampled upon for years, brought back to remembrance. We need to have our memories aroused, to

recall and re-impress certain solemn pledges which we made away yonder in the past. We need to be reminded of the covenant we made with God, and of the resolutions we formed to walk in the way of His commandments. Aye, and some of us, when the road is rough and the burden is heavy, and the clouds hang dark above, need to be reminded of the sweet, tender, inspiring words of Jesus assuring us of his sympathy, his fellowship and his abiding presence.

4. But finally, the Holy Ghost, says Christ, gives power. Standing on Mt. Olivet, with angel escorts waiting to attend Him to the courts of glory, He said to His disciples: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you," and we all know how that promise was fulfilled. He knew that without this divine furnishing they would be laughed to scorn. He knew that they would be as helpless to break through crusted forms as a troop of children is to beat down a frowning fortress of granite. What could they do in themselves, without money, without numbers, without social standing, to stem the tides of Pharisaic hate and breast the storms of opposition that swept over Judah's hill?

And so our Lord would not let them take a step until touched and thrilled by the Holy Ghost. Hence we find them in a receptive attitude, earnestly engaged in prayer, turning the empty vessels toward the skies, and in due time the Spirit came like a mighty rushing wind, and then they were clothed with power, ready to do battle, and go from victory to victory.

O, for this power to-day. We need it, and we may have it, for it was a permanent gift that was given to the church at Pentecost. We need it to inspire our zeal, to deepen our consecration, to increase our Christian activities. We need it to lift us out of our indifference, to awake us to a sense of our responsibility, to give us the courage to do and dare, to serve and suffer for the honor of our Lord. We need it in the pulpit, and in the pew, and along every line of our work.

What we need in this church, and in every other church of Christ, the wide land over, is to get back to first principles, and seek for power where alone it can be found. Jesus Christ tells us that He himself was anointed for His great mission by the Holy Ghost. Whenever Peter and the apostles are about to do anything great we find the account prefaced by some such words as these: "And being filled with the Holy Ghost." So, in the Old Testament, we read of this man and that man, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him," and, behold, he went forth to immortal exploits. This is what we need, and this we must have, or we can do nothing.

In the olden time, when Rome was in the front, and the tramp of her legions shook the world, if the fire went out in the temple of Vesta they would not suffer it to be lighted from another fire. It must be rekindled by drawing a pure, unpolluted beam directly from the sun. So our fire must come not from machinery, not from organization, not from these things which appeal to the eye of sense, but, if it comes at all, it must come from

above. Aye, and come it will, as certainly as Christ is true, if we prepare the fuel and turn our yearning hearts to heaven. "The promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off."

We need it, brethren. Don't get impatient with me if I dwell upon it with a good deal of reiteration. There is your engine upon the track. What a piece of workmanship! Burnished and resplendent, flinging back the sunbeams in a thousand arrows of light. But there it stands—a magnificent machine—useless and powerless. What is the matter? There is no steam in the boiler. Only let that be attended to, and it becomes a very Titan of power and fleeter than the winds. And when we see a magnificently equipped church standing still in the midst of the battle, bearing aloft the banner that never yet and never shall go down in defeat, but winning no trophies, gaining no victories, making no inroads upon the enemy's country, need we ask, What is the matter? The answer is plain—the element of power is wanting. The church has not yet received the Holy Ghost.

Not long ago a great steamship ran upon a bar coming into New York harbor. She was helpless. Tugs were sent for, and tried to pull her off, but in vain. Finally the captain said: "We shall have to lighten her up and wait for the tide." And that's what the church needs. She is aground. So heavily is she freighted with the things of this world that she has settled on the bar. Now and then strenuous efforts are made to pull her off, by resorting to human devices

and clever schemes, but the results are not reassuring. The load is too heavy. Oh, that we, and all who love her, might lighten her up by beginning at Jerusalem, and, by prayer and supplication, wait for the tides of the Spirit's power.

WHAT CHRIST TEACHES US TO BELIEVE CONCERNING THE ATONEMENT.

"I lay down my life for the sheep."—*John, 10:15.*

THIS morning we are to consider what Christ teaches us to believe concerning the Atonement. The etymology of the word gives us the key to its meaning, *At-one-ment*, that is the bringing together, or the reconciliation of those who have been at enmity. Of course Christ's incarnation and life constitute a part of the atoning plan, but as they look forward to his death on the cross for their efficacy and consummation, the atonement is usually understood to mean his sacrifice on Calvary. His work was finished only when by the grace of God he had "tasted death for every man." Then only was the veil of the temple rent in twain and the reconciliation complete.

By those who would rid the gospel of its distinctively evangelical feature and leave it like a body without a backbone, it is claimed that the atonement "is the invention of the apostle Paul and of other philosophising disciples." It is affirmed that the Saviour says noth-

ing, or next to nothing, about it; that instead of dwelling upon these matters of theology, he tells men to love their neighbors and to be truthful and pure and honest. They remind us that there is no doctrine of atonement in the Sermon on the Mount, or in the parable of the prodigal. The boy gets sorry for what he has done, resolves to do better, starts back home, and is heartily welcomed without the offering of any sacrifice to bring about reconciliation.

But I submit that it is manifestly unfair to say that Christ did not teach such and such a doctrine because he omitted it from one or two discourses. No minister can be expected to bring out a whole system of theology and touch upon all the fundamentals of Christianity in one or two sermons. Nobody is absurd enough to expect it. Why, then, should we look for anything so unreasonable in every talk of the Son of God?

There was good reason why he did not mention the atonement in the Sermon on the Mount. That was delivered near the beginning of his ministry, and, like a wise teacher, he would not lead his disciples into the depths until he got them somewhat accustomed to the shallow water along the shore. He kept that which was more difficult until they were better prepared to grapple with it. But that he did say a good deal about the atonement, in a variety of connections, and with very special and solemn emphasis I think you will see before I am done.

First of all, then, the institution of the Lord's supper shows us that in our Saviour's estimation the import-

ance of the atonement is supreme. His history is full of great and thrilling events, pre-eminently so, some of them awaking the songs of angels and made sublimely grand and impressive by voices and visitors from heaven. Think of the glories that gather around his advent and of the ineffable splendors of his transfiguration. Think of that immortal scene when, going down into the Jordan, he is baptised by John, while the Holy Spirit descends upon him like a dove, and out of the sky there come the words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Then follows his temptation, his crucial hour of trial, out of which he comes a conqueror. But of none of these has he left a memorial. No man knows the day of his birth and he never asked his disciples to keep it in perpetual remembrance. He made no request that that great day when Moses and Elias came out of the unseen glory to do him homage should be celebrated. What could be grander than his resurrection when "he burst the bars of death and triumphed o'er the grave." But he left no memorial of that. To be sure the christian Sabbath is a memorial of his coming again from the tomb but not by any specific command of his. And what could be conceived of as more awe-inspiring than his ascension when the clouds opened and received him out of sight, but he left no memorial of that. It seems to me it cannot fail to impress us as being profoundly significant that the only event of which he said, "Do this in remembrance of me," was his death. On the eve of his crucifixion, with his sorrowing dis-

ciples around him, he instituted the supper to be sacredly observed from generation to generation for the purpose of showing "the Lord's death till he come." But the very words with which it was established, "This is my body broken for you," "This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins,"—these very words gather about the atonement as the great central and vital fact. They declare in words too plain to be mistaken that the thing above all others which he wants to have remembered is his sacrificial death. They show us that whatever else may be forgotten, he wants the cross to stand out forever conspicuous and to be kept forever fresh and green in the memory of mankind.

When anybody tells us, therefore, that Jesus made little or nothing of the atonement, we point him to the last supper and ask him what he has to say in the face of the words, "Do this in remembrance of me?" What stronger proof can we possibly ask to convince us that in his estimation the sacrifice on the cross is the very substance of the gospel? In view of that memorial and of all its profound and pathetic meaning I am sure the church is right and in harmony with her great Head when, with swelling heart, she sings,

> "Rock of ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee."

The Lord Jesus teaches us to believe that the *atonement is vicarious.* A vicarious sacrifice is one that is

offered in the place of or as a substitute for another. To illustrate: Here is a man who has been drafted. He must enter the army and go forth to fight the battles of his country. But he has a wife and children, and to think of leaving them, perhaps forever, breaks his heart. A friend of his, however, who has no ties of home and family, comes forward and volunteers to take his place. He is accepted, starts for the front, and in a bloody engagement, while charging at the head of his company, is cruelly slain by the bursting of a shell. Thus his death is vicarious. He laid himself upon the altar of his country as a substitute for his friend. The illustration is of course imperfect. It does not begin to cover the case before us, for the Saviour died as a substitute for those who were not his friends, but it may serve to give us an idea of the meaning of the word *vicarious*. It means that Jesus Christ died in our room and stead, that he took our place and bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Or as the prophet Isaiah puts it, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed." And this agrees exactly with the teaching of Christ. He says in our text, "I lay down my life *for* the sheep." The same thought is clearly expressed in the words already quoted, "This is my body broken *for* you." In language still more to the point if possible he says, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom

for many." See how the idea of vicariousness stands out there. A ransom is something "presented as an equivalent to secure deliverance for those on whose behalf it is paid." That is, it takes their place and is accepted as a substitute for them. It may be money, or property, or men, but whatever it is, it is received in lieu of those who have been set at liberty. Hence when the Saviour declares that he gave his life a ransom for sinners, he plainly teaches the vicarious nature of his atonement.

There are those who tell us that Jesus died simply as a martyr, but no man can be a martyr who lays down his life of his own accord. A martyr is one whose sufferings are enforced; he has no power to resist, but Jesus surrendered himself to death by his own choice. Others tell us that he died to display the matchless wealth and depth of his love. No doubt there is a great deal of truth in that, but to put the emphasis there is misleading and mischievious. Most pertinently has it been said that "no love is expressed by a needless and useless sacrifice." If the suffering is not necessary, if it is not endured to serve some high and holy cause, it is folly, yea, it is more, it is sin. "The lover who blows out his brains to show his devotion earns no gratitude by that idiotic display." So if Jesus Christ had died merely for effect, if he had poured out his blood merely for the sake of producing a profound impression, it would have no more practical, uplifting power over men than the performance of the Passion Play upon the stage. It is the great central

and blessed truth that he died for us that is drawing men and saving them from their sins the wide-world over to-day. His death was vicarious. His bosom received the storm which but for him would have beaten upon us. His back was bared to the smiters that we might not suffer. The Rock was cleft not only that it might not fall upon us but that we might find shelter in its riven side. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Against the doctrine of the vicarious atonement two objections are often urged which it may be well to notice in this connection. The first is as to the necessity of suffering to procure the redemption of men. Why must the cross be the way to life? Why must peace be purchased at the expense of pain? But for those who stumble here it may diminish the difficulty somewhat to note how this fact fits into everything we enjoy in the way of temporal blessing. I may safely challenge you to point me to anything that blesses your life to-day and contributes to your happiness, in the way of social and domestic comfort, that has not come to you by virtue of somebody's pain, or along the road of suffering. In order that you may live in comfortable homes and attire yourselves in comfortable clothing many a back is made to ache and many a hand is blistered. To supply toothsome viands for your tables many an innocent creature must bleed and die. When you sit down around your well-laden boards to-day think back to the source whence these viands came and see if it be not so. Not only is it

true that most of our blessings come to us along the pathway of suffering, but the rule is that the higher the blessing the more pain and sorrow it costs; and hence it is certainly in keeping with this universal law that redemption, infinitely the highest blessing of all, should be procured by the keenest and most awful suffering of all.

The second objection has to do with the imputation of the sins of the guilty to the innocent. I do not pretend to be able to penetrate all its mysteries and solve all its difficulties, but I would like you to remember that the atonement of Christ is not by any means an isolated case. Explain it as we may, there is nothing more common than the fact that everywhere in human life and society the innocent *do* suffer for the guilty. The back of honest industry is loaded down to support indolence and self-imposed poverty. The law-abiding citizen is taxed and burdened because of the sins of the vicious and criminal classes. People who hate strong drink as they hate a serpent and regard the saloon as the consummate curse of society must nevertheless suffer for drunkenness. The hot lava that pours from these craters of woe and death burns and blisters the feet of thousands who never cross the threshold of a dram shop. Many an innocent child inherits from an intemperate and dissolute father a depraved appetite, an enfeebled constitution, and an awful legacy of pain. His whole life is blighted and blasted and withered by sins which he never committed.

Now these are hard facts and it will do us no good to quarrel with them, for they meet us at every turn. The reason for them in all its bearings is perhaps beyond our ken, but the thing I want you to notice is that they are right in line with the atonement. I touch upon this simply to show you that this great central truth of christianity agrees in the main with the facts of the divine government as we see them unfolding in the world around us. You may say it is wrong that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, but before you settle down in that position let me ask you this: Does a mother do any wrong when she suffers for her erring boy? Is it unjust for her to burden and break her heart with the sins of her own child? Or ought she to be indifferent to them and never allow them to cost her a pang? She would certainly be a most unnatural and cruel mother who could do that.

When the children of a home turn out badly, when they become transgressors of law and run off, like the prodigal, into the far country of vice and iniquity, who is it that suffers most? Is it not the heads of the household? Does it not bring down their gray hairs in sorrow to the grave? Does not the evil of their children pierce them through with pain and anguish? These questions we unanimously answer in the affirmative. Well now, is not God the one great Parent in this house of the universe? Why, then, should it be counted a strange and unjust thing, that he should suffer for his guilty children? In the case

of earthly parents their sufferings cannot, of course, save their children and atone for their transgressions, but is not their pain the same in kind that God endures in the room and stead of wandering sinners?

I am well aware that the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ has often been caricatured, and sometimes, unwittingly, in the house of his friends. Not long ago I received a pamphlet in which the writer repudiates this glorious doctrine and tries to make it odious by the following illustration. I give it to you in substance only, for it is too long to quote. Suppose, he says, that when President Garfield lay dying he had called his beloved son James to his side and addressed him as follows: "My son, I am dying at the hand of Guiteau, the chief of sinners. He had no excuse for the dastardly deed, and the law justly demands his death. But, my son, I love him, I forgive him. I desire that he may live, but that cannot be without a substitute. You must therefore take his place." The son consents, a gallows is erected, and on it dies, not the wretched assassin, but the faithful and loving son. Now says this pamphleteer, "what would be thought in heaven and earth of such a transaction as that?" And this he calls a fair presentation of the docirine in question.

But it would be difficult to conceive of a more hideous and monstrous perversion of the truth. God and his Son are not two but one. The sacrifice on Calvary was the act of the undivided Diety. When the Eternal Father provided an atonement for sin-

ners he did not reach out and lay the penalty of their sins upon any second party. He found the ransom price in his own bosom. He took the sacrifice out of his own heart. He and the Son are one, and the Son is God's self brought down to the level of human comprehension. "My Father which dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," and Christ was God, and who will say that it was unjust for God to suffer that we might live? This of course involves the mystery of the Trinity, but we are not going to get rid of mystery. It seems strange that men and women who cannot account for the beating of their own hearts should insist upon it. Seize upon this truth, therefore, and hold it for evermore, viz.: that, "in the Cross we find the Eternal God taking to himself the consequences of human sin; himself becoming the propitiation for the sin of the world; bearing it himself; pressed under it as a cart is pressed under sheaves; and putting it away."

Surely it is impossible to see anything wrong in this. We are told that in Bronson Alcott's school, if any of the boys broke the rules and became transgressors, instead of inflicting the penalty upon them, the celebrated teacher bore it himself. If that is unjust, if it is a violation of right and equity, for one person to volunteer to suffer as a substitute for another, then must we expunge from history's page its noblest deeds.

There are difficulties. I do not seek to disguise that fact, but instead of troubling ourselves with these, the

blessed truth itself ought to draw every one of us to the Crucified to-day. Every burden he carried, every battle he fought, every blow he received, every pang he felt, every woe he suffered, was for us, for us. Surely it ought to warm our hearts and fill our sky with light, as Christian men and women, to have this great theme brought to our attention afresh. It should inspire our hope and strengthen our faith every time the story is rehearsed. Since he has met all the demands of his righteous law as my vicar, my substitute; since he has by his own blood maintained the stability of his throne; since his infinite merit has been stretched around my demerit, and the mighty tide of his sacrifice has gone clean over my sin, what have I to fear? I am sure, dear friends, if we did but grasp this idea of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ in something of its fullness our trust would be sweeter and firmer, and we would have more steadiness in the storm.

Not only, however, does Christ teach us that the atonement is vicarious, but that it is *our only hope, our only ground of forgiveness.* We have often heard that before, and we thought perhaps it was some priestly formula, some dogmatic statement of narrow theologians. But I want to remind you that wherever we heard it, it was the truth as taught and reiterated again and again by the Son of God. One night he had a memorable talk with a learned Rabbi, Nicodemus by name, in the course of which he said: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must

the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Nicodemus was intelligent enough to see the point and force of that illustration, and so is the very least among us.

Not an Israelite in all the camp could be saved from the deadly poison of the serpent's bite who did not look upon the brazen image lifted up in the midst of the people. Look elsewhere and he must die. There was no help for him. So, in this passage, Jesus affirms that he must be lifted up—that is, crucified—and that only those who turn to him, believing, shall be saved. He teaches that the poison of sin is counteracted and destroyed by the look of faith. If that is not the meaning of his words to Nicodemus, what do they mean?

Thank God, he does not require strong, heroic, mighty faith. No doubt that is greatly to be desired, but it is not essential. A man can look, though his sight be dim, he can look, if he has only one eye, and that almost gone; yea, he can look if he is blind. He can look with the mind. He can turn his attention in the direction indicated, and that is all that is necessary. What Jesus wants us to do, what he solemnly declares we must do, or perish, is to trust in him alone as our atonement, and he who does that shall be saved, though his faith be as a grain of mustard seed, for the salvation is not in the faith, but in faith's object.

Another striking statement, made at the very close

of his ministry, is all I shall have time to trouble you with. To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus he said: "Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Here, you observe, he makes his sufferings, his atonement, the ground upon which sin is forgiven. It is that sacrifice that enables him to be just and the justifier of the ungodly. It is that sacrifice that enables him to vindicate his own holiness, while, at the same time he takes the sinner to his heart. But remember that sacrifice will avail only for those who avail themselves of it. The atonement has been made for all the race, but it never was intended to save the man who will not accept it. God, in his infinite love and compassion, provides it, but the sinner must appropriate it, or it is nothing to him.

There are many of you here this morning who have taken shelter behind the Cross, and have been sprinkled with the blood of that great sacrifice. I congratulate you upon your deliverance. You have made your calling and election sure by your choice of him that was slain. By the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, your sins have been buried forever under the atonement of Jesus Christ. You are the ransomed of the Lord, and are on your way to glory. I bid you, all hail. The winds may be contrary, storms may beat upon you, temptations may throw them-

selves across your path and seek to turn you back, but he of the pierced hands and feet will see you through. Your frail craft may pitch and toss about and threaten to go down, but with Christ in the vessel you will reach the shore. I congratulate you, and bid you be of good cheer. "His love is a stream that never freezes, a fountain that never fails, a sun that never sets in night, a shield that never breaks in fight; whom he loveth he loveth to the end." Fear not, none shall ever pluck you from God's hand. It were easier to pluck a star from the brow of heaven. Only see to it that you adorn the doctrine of the hour by a godly walk and conversation.

But there are some among you whose faces are the other way. The Good Shepherd is after you. He has traveled far and suffered much to bring you back. He has left his footprints on the jagged mountains, and his blood on the wayside thorns, "as he went to the desert to find his sheep." He has laid down his life to win you, to bring you where you might pillow your weary head close to his beating heart, and can you, will you, turn away indifferent still? I leave the question with you, only pausing long enough to say that as is your answer so will be your eternity, with Christ or without Christ, inside of that great temple of which he is the Light, or outside.

WHAT CHRIST TEACHES US TO BELIEVE ABOUT THE BIBLE.

"Making the word of God of none effect, through your tradition, which ye have delivered."—*Mark 7: 13.*

"And he said unto them, these are the words which I spoke unto you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets concerning me."—*Luke 24: 44.*

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."—*Matt. 5: 17, 18.*

THE battle for the truth never ceases to rage. For those who are in earnest there is no discharge in that war. The contestants are always in the field and the fight is always on. They change their tactics and shift their positions from time to time, but there is no surcease of conflict. A few years ago the tides of battle surged about the Christ. The best scholarship and the keenest criticism of the century were enlisted, and when the atmosphere cleared, as the struggle subsided, there he stood, as always, mighty to save, the wonderful, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

To-day the Bible is the centre around which the contest gathers. The rattle of intellectual artillery is heard all along the line, and splendid flashes of rhetorical fireworks disturb the sky. Even our secular papers have taken sides, and, as usual, have decided the matter with characteristic dispatch. It would be amusing, perhaps, if it were not so absurd, to see with what an infallible air they dispose of the most serious problems that can engage the thought of man. In this case, as might have been expected, their conclusions are in favor of the critics, who, in dealing with the Bible, use the penknife of Jehudi. As to the issue of the battle we have no doubt whatever. The Book will stand in its integrity. It is an anvil that has worn out a great many hammers. It will come out of this, as it has come out of every previous fire of conflict, unscathed and entire, not weakened, but strengthened and glorified by the ordeal. In the meanwhile it will serve to plant our feet more squarely on the Rock, and give firmer fibre to our faith to turn from men and warring schools to see what Jesus Christ teaches us to believe about the Book.

Before proceeding to this, however, it may be well to ask whether Christ is a competent judge in this case? Is he by grasp of mind, by spiritual insight, by purity of life, and poise of character qualified to sit in judgment upon the Book which we regard as Holy Writ? To ask the question is to answer it. The marvelous reach of his intellect is everywhere seen in his words and sayings. His mind penetrated at once to

the very heart of things and seized upon ultimate principles. To be impressed with the unapproachable quality of his mental calibre it is only necessary to study his answers to certain questions that were put to him. These answers were, in every case, extemporaneous, unpremeditated, but they were so complete, so crushing, so profound, and yet so plain and pointed, that they effectually silenced his enemies, and those enemies were among the keenest and most able men of their day. For three years they exercised all their ingenuity to entangle him; they brought forward every difficulty they could think of in the Scriptures, but his replies were so clear, so convincing, so severe upon themselves, that it is said "They durst not any more ask him any questions."

No matter how high, no matter how deep, the ethical problem, Jesus was at home in it. He dealt with it like one who saw it in all its bearings, near and remote. He had read the Scriptures, and read human life, and penetrated both to the very core. His power of condensation was superhuman. He could crowd a whole world of truth into a little sentence of a few simple words. Now all this means transcendent, intellectual force.

As to his *spiritual insight* I need not trouble you to speak a word. Every reader of the Gospels knows how he saw into the very depths. When he turned to the law and the prophets he saw not the letter, not books and chapters, but the spiritual truth behind. So in reading human life. He saw at once the motive, the

spirit by which men were actuated, and not that which was external and mechanical.

And where else will you find such moral integrity? His life has been scrutinized for nineteen centuries by friends and foes alike, and not a flaw has ever yet been detected. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?," his own challenge to the Scribes and Pharisees, has never yet been answered. Out of all the fires of criticism, out of the crucible of ages of intense investigation, that life has come, unsullied as a sunbeam, pure as the great White Throne. To all this add the fact of his perfect poise of character, his evenness of temper in every storm that beat about him, his calmness and patience under abuse, the absolute impartiality of his judgment, and I think you will agree with me that he is abundantly qualified to teach us concerning the Bible. We are prepared, therefore, to sit at his feet to learn what he has to say about the Book.

At the outset, then, he teaches us to believe that the *Bible is the Word of God.* He so characterizes the entire Old Testament. He sharply rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees for making the Word of God of none effect through their traditions, and by that Word is clearly meant the Holy Scriptures, so far as they were then written. He never questioned the sacred oracles, as he had learned them in the home of Joseph and Mary. He lived in them. He taught them. He bowed before their divine authority. He confounded the Pharisees and silenced the Saducees by quoting from Moses, and, in John 10:35, making the Word of

God synonymous with Scripture, he solemnly declares that the Scripture cannot be broken. It is the fashion now-a-days, in certain quarters, to rule out some of the alleged writings of Moses, which comprise the first five books of the Bible as not being part of the inspired record, but Jesus quotes from every one of them, and always as the Word of God. So, also, he quotes from Samuel, from Kings, from Chronicles, from the Psalms, from the Prophets, and puts them in the same category as belonging to the Word of God. Now, Jesus had studied these writings profoundly in his Nazareth home. He had brought to bear upon them all of his peerless powers, and mastered them, as his facility in quotation shows. Hence, he must have known whether they were true or false, and, especially, since he was the Son of God. But if they are false, if they are not the Word of God, could he have given them his unqualified endorsement, consistently with his pure and holy life? Would a person of such exalted character have resorted to the poor trick of quoting from spurious scriptures to fortify his own claims? Would he, who calls himself the Truth, and who has a right to that pre-eminence, have put his *imprimatur* upon documents which were counterfeit? To me, at least, such a thing seems not only incredible, but absurd, and I leave the critics to wrestle with it, while I stand with Jesus Christ. What he quotes as the Word of God I believe that you and I are warranted in fearlessly quoting as the Word of God, also.

He does not teach any particular theory of inspira-

tion. He does not tell us how these writings of Moses and the prophets were inspired, whether by dictation or illumination, or a certain superintendency which saved the authors from error, or whether the gold was supplied by the Holy Spirit, and the molds by man. All such nice questions as these were left to human wisdom. He simply tells us that these Scriptures are the Word of God, and his teaching ought to have its proper weight. He claims divine inspiration for his own words. Thus: "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's, who sent me." And in like manner he teaches us the inspiration of the Apostles. He promises them the Spirit who, he declares, will "guide them into all truth," and "bring all things to their remembrance." Hence he teaches us to believe that both the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God.

Passing from this, let me ask you to notice in the next place that he *makes himself the centre upon which all lines of Holy Writ converge.* In John 5:39, he says of the Scriptures: "These are they which *testify of me.*" And in the 46th verse of the same chapter he speaks as follows: "For if ye believed Moses ye would believe me, for he *wrote of me.*" Again, in the 24th of Luke, beginning at the 44th verse, he says to his Apostles: "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, *concerning me.* Then opened he their understanding that they might

understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." This is certainly remarkable language. Remember that it comes from the lips of the Son of God. He calmly and deliberately puts himself forward as constituting the very sum and substance of law and prophecy and psalm. In terms too plain to be misunderstood he affirms that the Scriptures bear "one common, supreme testimony, not to a shadowy hope, not to a mere human postulate of faith, but to a Person, the Saviour, who should live and die and rise again for the salvation of man," and that Saviour is himself.

Thus the Word of God is a wondrous house of many mansions, of which Christ is the key. Without him its treasures are locked up, they are hidden, and no human ingenuity can steal its way into their untold wealth. With him every door in its sixty-six apartments can be opened and their precious contents brought to light. Apart from Him the Bible is a sealed book. Its types, its symbols, its sacrifices, its prophecies, and many of its historic allusions are incomprehensible. They are like the hieroglyphics on some ancient obelisk. They evidently mean something, but, without the key, nobody can tell what. So, without Christ, the Word of God is beyond our ken. We have types with no answering antitype. Shad-

ows pointing to no explanatory light, hints of a Coming One that only mock and baffle the searcher after truth, prophecies that never issue in fulfillment. Many a devout student has found that he could make nothing out of these Scriptures until he began their interpretation from Christ as the centre. As soon as he did that he was amazed and delighted to see how the Book yielded up its secrets and how the light fell upon its dark places. It used to be said in olden times that every road led to Rome; and it is true now, and always, that every pathway in Holy Writ, whether marked out by Moses or the Prophets, finds its centre and terminus in Jesus Christ. So he taught himself, and the lesson cannot be too thoroughly written upon our hearts. The scientific student who should undertake to interpret the Mississippi Valley with the Father of Waters left out, would have a task no more difficult, to say the least, than would the student who should try to understand the Bible with the Lord Jesus left out. He is as essential to a correct knowledge of the drift and purpose of the Bible as Hamlet is to a correct conception of the great tragedy that bears his name.

Moreover, by *his own example*, he teaches us to rest calmly and confidently on the written and indestructible Word of God. His own attitude toward this book shows more forcibly than any words could, the estimate he puts upon it. His utterances standing alone, unsupported by his example, would have little or no weight; not enough, certainly, to be convincing. But

he practiced what he preached. If He taught others to confide in the Book he did so himself most implicitly. If he spoke of the Book with the utmost assurance, he trusted it with the utmost assurance. Here, as everywhere, there is no disparity between his sayings and doings.

In the Wilderness, when the Tempter came and exercised all his ingenuity to poison his mind with doubt; when he came with his mouth filled with *ifs*, did Jesus stop to parley? Did he argue? Did he take refuge in his wit or his genius? Not for a moment. But he said, "It is written." He said it three several times, and each time with keener accent. He met the enemy with no untempered blade, but with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. To beat him, and scathe him, and hurl him back, he laid hold of this battery of heaven and plucked the lightning from the skies. There was no questioning the justice of the fearful struggle. His energies were not allowed to evaporate in vague wondering as to why it was thus and so. He simply threw himself back upon the Word, and there he rested in calm acquiescence with the will of his Father.

Again, when a certain lawyer came inquiring what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus did not depend upon his own skill and cleverness for an answer. He referred him to the Word, and said, "How readest thou?" The lawyer quoted the well-known passage about love to God and love to man, and Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right; this do and thou

shalt live." Scripture was to him the answer to all questions; the solution of all problems bearing upon man's relation to his neighbor and his God.

In the most solemn hours of his life, in his conflicts, his trials, his sufferings, the Written Word was ever on his lips. He said repeatedly that things turned out so and so in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. And when the final storm gathered about him and culminated on the Cross, he rested his soul on that Word, "amid the cyclone of death," and the last sayings he uttered, as he hung upon the tree, were quotations from the Psalms. If, therefore, the testimony of Jesus, embodied both in speech and example, is to be relied upon, the Scriptures are the Word of God. If we believe Him we must believe them. This assertion will bear investigation, and I commend it to your most careful and candid consideration.

Not only, however, does He assure us that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and that He is their central theme, but that *they are to stand.* In his Sermon on the Mount he says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." With still warmer emphasis, if possible, he declares in Luke 16:17: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail." He was not afraid that the Book would become obsolete and perish. He was not afraid that the world would out-

grow it, and the wisdom of man supersede it. He took it up reverently and, looking at it, he said, "This Book is to abide. Think not that it will ever vanish away and be forgotten," and his faith in its staying qualities ought to strengthen ours.

When the Emperor of Rome was being ferried across a certain stormy water the boatman became pale with fright. He thought they were going to be swallowed up by the wave, but the Emperor inspired him with courage by saying: "Fear not, you carry Cæsar." So, though the storms may rage around it and threaten to engulf, this boat of Holy Writ will ride the billow and outlive the tempest, for it carries the Son of God, whose hand is on the storm.

Out from the Cape of Good Hope there runs into the sea a dangerous bar some forty or fifty miles in length. The water, we are told, sweeps around it with a tremendous swell, making navigation extremely perilous at certain seasons of the year. Around this cape an East Indiaman, called the Lady Holland, was fighting her way in the year 1830, bound for Hindoostan. For days and days clouds filled the sky. Again and again the vessel was beaten out of her course. Soundings were taken, and the Captain found that the ship was over the bar. Realizing the peril of her position, he was just about to give orders to turn about. But it was too late. With an awful crash she struck. Her back was broken, and her forepart sank in the wild breakers. As Providence would have it, however, all on board escaped to a little patch of land

amid the rocks. Among them was a young man from Scotland by the name of Alexander Duff. He was going out as a missionary to India. While the shipwrecked passengers were huddled together for shelter in a wretched little hovel, a sailor, walking along the beach, found a Bible cast up high and dry. He opened it, and found Alexander Duff's name distinctly written in it. Out of a library of 800 volumes which he was taking to India it was the only one saved. What is still more singular, it had been packed with the other books, but had been carefully wrapped in chamois skin, and was not even injured. He took the book, and to the drenched and shivering passengers read the 107th Psalm. *

The incident made a profound and lasting impression on the young man's mind. He took it as the voice of Providence declaring that the Bible is the Supreme Book for India and for mankind. But the significant part of the story for us is the striking illustration it gives us of the history of the Bible, the experiences through which it has come, the storms which it has outlived. To wreck it, to destroy it, has been impossible. Men like Gibbon and Hume, and Voltaire, and Paine, and Ingersoll, have turned all the artillery of their wit, their satire, their ridicule and their eloquence upon it, but still it stands, as Jesus said. To refute it, to prove it unreliable, travelers have searched the ruins of ancient cities, like Volney, and mighty scholars have ransacked history and sci-

* "The Inspired Word," page 11.

ence, but still it stands. To undermine it and gainsay its claims, geologists have digged into the bowels of the earth, and astronomers have delved among the stars, but still it stands. About fifty years ago the higher critics began their attacks. They assaulted it here and assaulted there, now in the Old Testament and now in the New, and their assaults have been kept up and multiplied from year to year, but still it stands. The half century in which it has sustained the most determined and skillful assaults has been precisely the half century of its greatest triumphs.

Since John wrote on lonely Patmos, and Paul wrote in his "own hired house" in Rome, the whole face of the world has been changed, turned upside down, empires have fallen and empires have risen, science and philosophy have changed front again and again, and hoary systems have dropped from behind the curtains of the past, but the Bible stands. Not one jot or tittle of God's Word has passed away. Jesus said it would abide, and he knew what he was talking about. What he says is worth believing. Celsus was famous once, Voltaire was famous once, Bolingbroke was famous once. When they opened their mouths it was as though Sir Oracle had spoken. But where are their books to-day? They are either long ago out of print, or feeding the moth on dusty shelves, or forming buttresses from which the deft spider suspends his web, but the Bible stands, and was never so widely known, or so deeply loved, or so devoutly studied, or so mighty in power, as in this year of grace, 1891.

Many of the interpretations put upon it by schools and commentators are passing away, but we need not weep over that. Who cares for the scaffolding so long as the building remains? Let it go, if its work is done. The building will look better and be better without it. Interpretations are not sacred. Interpretations are not inspired. The scaffolding is useful, but it does not belong to the architect's plan. Interpretations are going. They have gone in the past, and they will go in the future, but what of that, so long as the Book interpreted abides? When the rain comes and the water pours in torrents along the streets, you are not afraid that your houses are going to be washed away. The filth will go, the rubbish will go, all unnecessary accumulations will go, but you are glad of that, for it will leave things cleaner and more wholesome. So these showers of investigation, and these torrents of criticism that are falling upon the Book will, no doubt, sweep away some old interpretations which we have loved and to which we have clung, but they will leave, not a mutilated Bible, not a fragmentary Bible, but the complete Bible, as we now have it, more perfectly understood and more highly prized than ever.

We need have no fears for the Book, fellow-men. It will stand, for Jesus said so. It can never die, for He, its heart, its life, is immortal. It will be opposed, it will be attacked with growing fierceness as its victories multiply, but, like the birds which beat themselves to death against the glass globes that surround

the electric lights of the city, those who assault it will be flung back defeated, baffled, while it shines on with brightening ray as the night of time wears toward eternal dawn.

JESUS CHRIST—MYTH, OR MAN, OR GOD?

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."—*John, 1:1-5.*

AS we approach the Christmas-tide, when the humanity of our Lord will be emphasized, it is fitting that we should fortify our faith in the divine side of His nature. We need to be very sure of His divinity, for our own sakes, and, as we live in a community where His divinity is frequently challenged, we ought to be so thoroughly grounded in this doctrine as to be able to defend it against all gainsayers for the sake of our Christianity. With these thoughts in mind, therefore, I am to speak to you this morning on the deity of Jesus. I shall endeavor to prove, both by reason and Scripture, that He is one with the Father, "very God of very God."

No thoughtful mind can pass lightly over the words of our text. They arrest the attention at once. There is in them the boom of infinity. These are not the waves of any interior lake that we hear splashing

upon the shore, but the solemn thunder of the boundless sea. For fullness of meaning, for clearness of statement, and for simple majesty of expression, the passage is without a parallel. Francis Junius, the distinguished scholar, who owed to this passage his spiritual enlightenment, was profoundly impressed with "the authority of the composition," and characterized it as "infinitely surpassing the highest flights of human eloquence." How came a plain, unlettered fisherman to write in this fashion?

When a biographer sits down to write a book he usually goes into the ancestry of his subject. He considers it important to know something of his pedigree. Accordingly, we find Matthew tracing the descent of our Lord back to Abraham. Luke is still more thorough, and traces it from Adam; but John pushes back into the very home of Eternity, and says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." You understand, of course, that he is speaking of Jesus of Nazareth, whose character is simply and fully set before us in the gospels. About this unique and wonderful character innumerable books have been written. It is admitted by all that it stands alone. It has challenged the admiration of the world. The shafts of criticism have fallen about it as impotently as arrows drop to the ground when shot against a ledge of frowning granite. The Person to whom this unrivalled character belongs has been and is to-day accounted for in three ways, whose comparative merits you are now asked to examine with me and carefully weigh.

I. First, there are those who tell us that Jesus Christ is an invention, a creation of the imagination. This view of the case was revived and advocated with great ability some forty or fifty years ago, by David Strauss of Germany, and still has its champions. There have been mythical characters—such, for example, as William Tell—which for centuries have been accepted as historical. But it is to be noticed that all such characters fall infinitely below that of Jesus. They are imperfect; His is conceded to be perfect.

In literature, we find that men have attempted, in two ways, to draw a perfect character, viz., from life and from the imagination, real characters and fictitious characters; but both have failed. In the former case, because there have been no perfect characters to describe; and, in the second case, because an imperfect imagination is not able to conceive an absolutely blameless manhood. Take Shakespeare, and, with all his matchless genius, has he invented one perfect character? Run through all the masterpieces of fiction and see if you can find a solitary life delineated that will bear the closest inspection on every side. You are sure to detect a weak spot somewhere. Take the most complete model that fiction has ever given to the world, compare it with the model portrayed in these gospels, and see how it darkens, like a candle held up before the sun.

Now look for a moment at this Jesus as He is described in the gospel narrative. He is a Jew, "a member of the most exclusive race that ever lived,"

yet He is set before us, and that, too, by Jewish writers, as no respecter of persons. His love is as broad as humanity. He is of the seed-royal, yet the friend and companion of the poor. He is original, but never eccentric; holy, but never sanctimonious; serious, but never sour; stern, but never severe; tender, but never weak. Enamelled hypocrisy He denounces in terms that wither and burn like a fire, but to the poor outcast, the wanderer, the prodigal, He speaks in words as sweet as heaven. Though born in a manger and schooled in a carpenter's shop, when He opens His mouth men listen, spell-bound, and the ages listen. While He mingles with men, and sits at their tables, and enters into their experiences, yet He seems to walk among the stars. He prays as naturally as He breathes, and talks of God as familiarly as man speaks of his nearest neighbor. As pure as a lily, He is, nevertheless, tempted to sin as no mortal was ever tempted. He provides bread for the multitudes with the utmost ease, yet appeases His own hunger by eating raw corn in the field. Able to bring money from the mouth of a fish to pay the custom dues of Himself and His friend Peter, He is, nevertheless, so poor that He has not where to lay His head. He raises the dead, yet dies Himself by the hand of Pharisaic hate. "He saved others; Himself He could not save," such, very briefly sketched, is the character which the gospel writers give us; and no one, so far as I know, has ever yet claimed that they were geniuses. They were not even men of learning. Luke was the most schol-

arly among them, but the style of Greek he uses shows that he was not a highly educated man.

The question then is pertinent: Did these men invent the character of Jesus Christ? Virgil, who lived and wrote just a short time before their day, is conceded to have been a great genius. His hero was the pious Æneas, but who would dare to set up the Roman poet's conception against Jesus of Nazareth, whom fishermen and publicans delineate. If it required a genius to invent Æneas, could common men invent a Christ? It is no easy matter to create a great and original character. If you think it is, let the most clever among you try it, and my word for it, you will soon change your mind. Virgil is not original. He borrows from Homer, and Dante borrows from Virgil, and Milton from Dante, and even Shakespeare, we are told, "borrowed his plots, incidents and characters without scruple." But from whom did the writers of the gospels borrow? What character could have given them a clew to such a life as that of Christ?

If they invented Christ, if He is a fabrication, then see what follows. Men without genius, without any special learning, have imagined a character immeasurably superior in every particular to the loftiest creations of the most gifted writers of all the ages. In the field in which the Shakespeares, the Goethes and the Scotts have won their renown, they are infinitely surpassed by four humble and unlearned men. Are we not then inevitably driven to the conclusion so well expressed by Theodore Parker, the distinguished Uni-

tarian: "Shall we be told," says he, "that such a man never lived—that the whole story is a lie? Suppose that Plato and Newton had never lived. But who did their wonders and thought their thoughts? It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated Jesus? None but Jesus." This, then, is the point to which we are driven by calm, unbiased reason, viz., that these gospel writers were not inventors, but reporters. The Jesus whom they set before us was not imagined, but drawn from the life. "My friend," says Rousseau, the infidel, "men do not invent like this; and the facts respecting Socrates, which no one doubts, are not so well attested as those about Jesus Christ. These Jews could never have struck this tone, or thought of this morality, and the gospel has characteristics of truthfulness so grand, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that their inventors would be even more wonderful than He whom they portray." The theory, then, that Jesus is a fiction must be abandoned. It does not explain. The key does not fit the lock.

II. Since, therefore, He must have been a real person, can He be explained and accounted for on the theory that He was only a man? By friend and foe alike, it is admitted that His character is perfect. Let me quote, in this connection, the testimony of two or three well known writers who, to say the least, were anything but friendly to the orthodox view of Christianity. Speaking of Christ, John Stuart Mill calls Him "the ideal representative and guide of human-

ity." Strauss, the German rationalist, already referred to, although he adopts the mythical explanations of Jesus, says: "He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought, and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart." Dr. Channing, the famous Unitarian, speaks of Him thus: "The character of Jesus is wholly inexplicable on human principles." This testimony, be it observed, is thoroughly impartial, and, I think, you can see its force. The Roman procurator's verdict, "I find in Him no fault at all," is the verdict of the ages.

Approach His character from what side you will and it is without a flaw. His piety toward God is matched by His benevolence toward man. His life is strictly just, and at the same time beautifully kind. He is temperate, but never austere; courageous, but never rash; humble, but never servile; dignified, but never cold; singular, but never affected; devout, but never ecstatic; independent, but never disrespectful; intensely in earnest, but never excited. There is no defect and no excess; not too much of one virtue and too little of another, but an absolutely perfect balance of qualities. It is impossible to conceive of a single point at which his character, as depicted in the Gospels, can be improved. It were easier to add a tint of beauty to the rose, or a beam of splendor to the sunset glory than to amend the character of Jesus. In every other exalted personage we find both weakness and strength. There is always something to mar,

something to break up the consistency. Luther was great, but he sometimes lost his patience and flew into a passion. Calvin was great, but he could not break away wholly from the influence of his environment. Wesley was great, but his views of truth were circumscribed; he saw only a small arc of the infinite circle. So of all other great leaders and epoch-makers. But in Jesus Christ we find one who is symmetrical throughout. There is nothing little, nothing narrow, nothing that can be omitted. "When most at sea," says a writer in the Unitarian Review, "When most at sea upon other points, even the most unbelieving have felt that in the moral excellence of Jesus Christ they have placed their feet upon the everlasting rock. * * * They may hold out successfully against other arguments, but they confess themselves conquered here. The pure spiritual life of Jesus has been the leaven in the three measures of meal. The wonderful beauty of his life has been testified to by men of all creeds and of no creeds." This is strong testimony, and I would like you to hold it in mind, as it will bear vitally upon our conclusion.

It is acknowledged, then, by men of all creeds and of no creed, that the character of Jesus is not only good, but morally perfect. It will be in order, therefore, in close connection with this thought, to consider his claims; and these, be it remembered, are recorded in the very same gospels that describe his life. See, then, what he claims for himself:

1. He claims to be *all-powerful.* To his disciples he said: "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth."

2. He claims to be *omnipresent.* "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

3. He claims to have *existed before the world was.* In his prayer in the 17th of John he says: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

4. He claims to have *come from God.* Thus: "I proceeded forth and came from God."

5. He claims to be the judge before whom all men are to be gathered. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another."

6. He claims a right to *equal honor with the Father.* "All men should honor the Son, *even* as they honor the Father."

7. He claims to be *one with the Father.* "I and my Father are one." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

8. He claims to be *without sin.* Conscious of his stainless purity he flings down the challenge: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

9. He claims to be *able to forgive sin.* "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin, then saith he to the sick of the palsy: 'Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house.'"

Such are some of his claims. Besides, he calls himself the "light of the world," "the bread of life," "the way, the truth, and the life," "the good shepherd," "the door into the sheepfold," "the vine," and so on to the end of the list. If he never made these claims, then we cannot believe the gospel writers. If we cannot believe the gospel writers, then it follows that men who are deceivers and impostors have delineated the only perfect character the world has ever seen. Could such a pure stream come from such an impure fountain? But we have already seen that they could not have been forgers and inventors; that they must have painted from the life. It follows, then, since they were narrators of fact, and not writers of fiction, that Jesus did make these claims.

Now, one of two things is certain. Either these claims are *true* or *they are false.*

Let us suppose for a moment that they are false. Let us assume that he was not all-powerful; not omnipresent; not equal with the Father; not an inhabitant of eternity before the world was; not able to forgive sin, but simply a man. Then it follows that the spotless Jesus, "the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought," made claims to which he had no right. He claimed to be the Son of God, and

allowed himself to be worshipped as God. He suffered them to trust in him and to call him "My Lord and my God." If he was only a man this was idolatry, and yet he permitted it to pass without rebuke. The Jews certainly understood him to claim that he was God, and for this they condemned him to death; he was also honored as divine by his followers, and if he was not, why did he not disabuse their minds of a delusion so cruel? Will a good and pure and noble man allow his friends to entertain opinions of him which are not only utterly false, but which will lead to persecution and reproach and martyrdom? Will a man so wise, so self-poised, so tender and kind, encourage his disciples to give up everything for his sake, to follow him, even to the death, to love him more than father or mother, or sister or brother, only to deceive them at last and plunge them in despair? It is inconceivable. If, as another has said—and I quote the words with bated breath—if Christ is simply a man, and these claims of his are false, "He has corrupted the whole current of human history. He has deluded millions of people for nineteen centuries. He is the great impostor of the race; a man so mighty in sin that forgiveness cannot reach him."

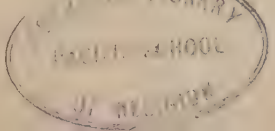
That seems like a terrible thing to say, or even to think, but upon the supposition that Jesus was only a man and these claims false, the language is none too strong. Put these claims upon the lips of any mere man, in any land or age, and they brand him

either with insanity or infamy. Is it not easy to see that to put such claims on any human lip is to carry blasphemy to its farthest possible extreme? And yet when Jesus utters them they produce no shock whatever.

But these astounding claims for himself are equaled by his *claims from men*. Once a woman came to him with a box of ointment. It was all she had in the world. But instead of taking a part of it, just to show his appreciation of her grateful love, he took every particle of it. Could you have done that? Nay, verily. You would have said, "Since you are so kind as to offer it, I will take just a little. It would be cruel to take it all." Another poor woman came along one day. She was in her widow's weeds, and appealed to the sympathy of every great heart as she made her way toward the temple. We would expect to hear him say, "Poor woman; we cannot take anything from her. She needs every penny she can raise to buy bread for her own household." But he didn't say that. She took out her two mites, cast them into the treasury, and he received them both. Is that humanity?* And yet his heart was the kindest, the biggest, the world has ever known.

He never takes a part of anything. He claims all, and must have it. He does not ask our friendship and sympathy, but claims our very souls; claims them unconditionally. He claims our time, our talents, our possessions, our entire manhood and womanhood, lays

* See Dr. Parker's "Inner Life of Christ," vol. iii, 325.



his hand upon them all and says: "They are mine." We may safely challenge any man to reconcile these claims, both for himself and from men, with the theory that he is only a man.

See, then, where the argument leads us, on the supposition that these claims are false. If they are false, the holiest among the holy led a life of imposture; the "loftiest ideal of humanity" usurped honors to which he had no right; the most lowly and candid being that ever trod the earth was guilty of playing a part; the most unselfish was the most exacting; the most humble never missed an opportunity to exalt himself; that he who loved most to commune with God was an unparalleled deceiver; that he who died to establish the world's purest and best religion was, of all men, the most vain and egotistical and corrupt.

That, fellow-men, is the logic of the situation, and there is no escaping it. Here is his character, pure and spotless as the great White Throne. It is conceded that it could not have been invented. Here are the Gospels which contain these claims. It is acknowledged that these writings are the original sources of all we know concerning Jesus. If, then, these claims are false, everything is false, and we find ourselves involved in a hopeless tangle of contradictions.

III. Since, therefore, the two explanations thus far considered are insufficient to account for the Christ, we come now to the third and last, the one that throbs through our text and through all the sacred volume. If it is impossible that he should be a

myth, if the content of the word *man* falls infinitely short of measuring up to the necessities of the case; then are we forced to the conclusion that his claims are valid, and that he is God. Admit this to be true and difficulties vanish, contradictions are reconciled, the sky clears away. It explains his power, it explains his wisdom, it explains the matchless grace and fulness of his speech, it explains the wondrous contrasts that meet in his life, his majesty and his lowliness, his riches and his poverty, his humility and his self-exaltation; it explains his words and his works, his life and his death. Take him at his own estimation, accept his statements, and the music of the Gospels is one, rythmic in its consistency and heavenly in every burst and throb and strain from prelude to *finale.*

Yes, men and women, he is God. Reason affirms it. The Scriptures declare it. His own lips assert it, and our hearts respond with an unqualified, *Amen.* For, after all, there is something in these natures of ours deeper than any logic can reach; something back of the intellect, and greater than the intellect, a soul-life, a soul-love, a soul-longing, with eyes keener than any that belong to the understanding. Those eyes penetrate the veil, they look behind into the region of spirit, and they see Him and know Him as God. While I would do honor to the mind, while I would crown and glorify it, yet the heart is greater, it reaches further, it stands for more, and when the heart is appealed to for a verdict, it cries out: "My Lord, and my God."

For such a verdict I ask this morning. I trust I have given you something to think about. God forbid that I should ignore the intellect, but it belongs to the preacher to speak to the whole man, and especially to the deeper man, to that part of his nature which determines his living, viz., his heart and his conscience. So, while I ask you to conclude by intellectual processes, I ask you to accept, to lay hold, with the affections and the will.

He is God, God. He was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Do you admit it? Do you acknowledge it on the strength of his own statements, backed up by a character immaculate as a sunbeam? Then why, O why, do you withhold from him your homage and love? You are not asked to worship an infinite despot, to bend the knee to an Almighty Tyrant. You are asked simply to come to the One God, to Jesus Christ, who was the express image, the supreme manifestation of the Father, who made himself a way, a road, over which the weary feet of humanity might come back to the old home-land of heaven. Will you join the returning throng? You are asked to come to the great Burden-Bearer, to the Crucified, but risen God, to heaven's divine Embassador for help, for guidance, for comfort, for pardon. Who in all this company will take the responsibility either of postponement or rejection?

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